Lenin

The Land Question and the Fight for Freedom

PROGRESS Publishers

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THE LAND QUESTION AND THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

The Duma[1] is discussing the land question. Two main proposals are offered for the solution of this problem: one advocated by the Cadets,[2] and the other advocated by the "Trudoviks",[3] i.e., the peasant deputies.

Concerning these solutions the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.[4] quite rightly said in its resolution on the attitude to be taken towards the peasant movement: "The bourgeois parties are trying to utilise the peasant movement and to bring it under their control–one (the Socialist-Revolutionaries[5]) in pursuit of their object of utopian petty-bourgeois socialism, and the other (the Cadets) with an eye to preserving, in some measure, large-scale private landownership and, at the same time, to weakening the revolutionary movement by satisfying the property instincts of the peasantry with partial concessions."

Let us see what this resolution of the Social-Democratic Congress means. The Cadet Party is a semi-landlord party. Many liberal landlords belong to it. It strives to protect the interests of the landlords and agrees only to such *concessions* to the peasantry as are inevitable. The Cadets are striving as far as possible to protect large-scale private landownership and are opposed to complete alienation of all the landed estates for the benefit of the peasantry. The object of their proposal that the peasants should pay compensation for the land, i.e., should *buy* the land from the landlords through the state, is to transform the upper sections of the peasantry into a "party of order". In fact, no

matter how this compensation is arranged, no matter how "fair" a price may be fixed for the land, compensation will be an easier matter for the well-to-do peasants and will fall as a heavy burden upon the poor peasantry. No matter what regulations may be drawn up on paper providing for purchase by the village community, etc., the land will in practice remain inevitably in the hands of those who are able to pay for it. Hence the compensation scheme will strengthen the rich peasants at the expense of the poor; it will disunite the peasantry and thereby weaken its struggle for complete freedom and for all the land. The compensation scheme is a *bait* held out to the more prosperous section of the peasantry to induce it to *desert* the cause of freedom and to go over to the side of the *old authorities.* Paying compensation for the land means paying ransom to be freed from the struggle for freedom; it means bribing a section of the fighters for freedom to desert to the enemies of freedom. The well-to-do peasant who pays compensation money for his land will become a small landlord, and it will be very easy for him to desert to the side of the old landlord and bureaucratic authorities and remain there.

Hence the resolution of the Social-Democratic Congress is quite right when it says that the Cadet Party (this semi-landlord party) advocates measures that will *weaken* the revolutionary movement, i.e., the struggle for freedom.

Now let us examine the solution of the land problem proposed by the "Trudovik", or peasant, deputies in the Duma. They have not quite cleared up their views as yet. They stand midway: between the Cadets and the "rustics" (Popular Socialist Party), between compensation for part of the land (the Cadets' proposal) and confiscation of all the land (proposed by the Socialist-Revolutionaries); but they are steadily moving away from the Cadets and drawing nearer to the "rustics".

Is the resolution of the Social-Democratic Congress right in describing the "rustics" as a bourgeois party, whose objects are those of utopian petty-bourgeois socialism?

Let us take the very latest Land Reform Bill[6] proposed by the "rustics" and published in yesterday's issue of their

Narodny Vestnik (No. 9). This Bill provides for the complete abolition of all private landownership and for "universal and equalised land tenure". Why do the "rustics" want to introduce equalised land tenure? Because they want to abolish the distinction between rich and poor. This is a socialist aim. All socialists want this. But there are different kinds of socialism; there is even clerical socialism; there is petty-bourgeois socialism, and there is proletarian socialism.

Petty-bourgeois socialism expresses the dream of the small proprietor of how to abolish the distinction between rich and poor. Petty-bourgeois socialism assumes that it is possible for all to become "equalised" proprietors, neither poor nor rich; and so the petty-bourgeois socialists draft Bills providing for universal and equalised land tenure. But in reality, poverty and want cannot be abolished in the way the small proprietor wants to do it. Equalised *use* of the land is impossible so long as the rule of money, the rule of capital, exists. No laws on earth can abolish inequality and exploitation so long as production for the market continues, and so long as there is the rule of money and the power of capital. Exploitation can be completely abolished only when all the land, factories and tools are transferred to the working class, and when large-scale socialised and planned production is organised. That is why proletarian socialism (Marxism) shows that all the hopes of petty-bourgeois socialism of the possibility of "equalised" small-scale production, or even of the possibility of preserving small-scale production at all under capitalism, are groundless.

The class-conscious proletariat fully supports the peasant struggle for all the land and for complete freedom; but it warns the peasants against all false hopes. The peasants can, with the aid of the proletariat, completely throw off the tyranny of the landlords, they can completely put an end to landlordism and to the landlord and bureaucratic state. The peasants may even abolish all private ownership of land. All such measures will greatly benefit the peasants, the working class, and the whole people. It is

in the interests of the working class to render the utmost assistance to the peasants' struggle. But the overthrow of the power of the landlords and the bureaucrats, however complete, will not in itself undermine the power of capital. And only in a society freed from the rule of the landlords and bureaucrats will the last great struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the fight for a socialist system, be fought out.

That is why the Social-Democrats fight so resolutely against the treacherous programme of the Cadets, and warn the peasants against harbouring false hopes about "equalisation". To achieve success in the present struggle for land and freedom, the peasants must be entirely self-reliant and independent of the Cadets. They should not be misled by the discussion of all sorts of land reform Bills. As long as power remains in the hands of the old autocratic, landlord and bureaucratic government, it will be a waste of time to discuss these proposals for "labour norms", "equalisation", etc. The peasants' struggle for the land will only be weakened by this jumble of clauses and regulations in the various Bills, which the old authorities will either throw out or else transform into new instruments for deceiving the peasantry. "Land Reform Bills" will not help the peasants to understand how to obtain the land: if anything, they will make it more difficult. They merely clutter up the question of the power of the old bureaucratic government with petty and trivial legalistic crotchets. They merely muddle heads with hopes of the coming of good, kind government officials, when as a matter of fact the old savage officials retain all their unlimited power of violence. Drop this playing with paper "Land Reform Bills", gentlemen. The peasants will settle the land question easily enough as soon as the obstacle of the old authorities is swept away. Better devote all your attention to the peasants' struggle for the complete removal of all such obstacles.

Written on May 19 (June 1), 1906 Vol. 10, pp. 436-39
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May 20, 1906

THE LAND QUESTION IN THE DUMA

The Cadets first move n the Duma was to draw up an address n rep y to the address from the throne Instead of a demand they drew up a timid request The r second move was s ently to pass to the order of the day when the r request that a depu ation be rece ved to present the Address was re ected Th s time they behaved sti more t m d y Now comes the th rd move–the debate on the and question wh ch has been ncluded n the bus ness of the Duma

All workers shou d pay particu ar attent on to th s quest on The and quest on s the one that s most of a wor rying the masses of the peasants and the peasants have now become the principa and a most the so e a es of the workers n the revo ut on The and question w sho better than anyth ng e se whether the Cadets who ca themse ves the party of peop e s freedom are oya y ser ng the cause of peop e s freedom

What do the peop e e primari y the peasantry want? The peasants want the and Everybody knows that The peasants are demand ng that a the and n the country shou d be ong to them They want to throw off the tyranny of the land ords and the bureaucrats They want to take the and from the and ords so that the atter may no longer impose abour-service upon them wh ch s virtual y the o d corvee and they want to take power away from the bureaucrats to prevent them from ord ng t any long

or over the common people. The workers must help the peasants in their fight for the land, and also must help them to formulate the land question in straightforward, clear and definite terms.

It is particularly easy to confuse and obscure the land question. It is easy to argue that, of course, land must be allotted to the peasants, and then to hedge this allotting of land around with such conditions as will make it quite useless for the peasants. If the government officials do the allotting again, if the liberal landlords are again appointed as "civil mediators"[7] and if the old autocratic government determines the "modest dimensions" of the compensation to be paid, then the peasants, instead of deriving any benefit, will be swindled as they were in 1861[8] and there will only be another noose around their necks. Therefore the class-conscious workers must most vigorously explain to the peasants that on the question of the land they should be particularly cautious and distrustful. As matters stand today, the question of compensation, and the question of which authority is to "allot" the land, are of the greatest importance. The question of compensation will serve as an immediate and infallible test of who stands for the peasants and who for the landlords, and also who is trying to desert from one side to the other. The Russian peasant knows–ah, how well he knows!–what compensation means. On this question, the divergence of interests of the peasants and the landlords is splendidly revealed. And the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. was therefore quite right in substituting the word "confiscation" (i.e., alienation without compensation) for the word "alienation" in the original draft of the agrarian programme.

On the question of which authority is to allot the land, the interests of the peasants and the government officials diverge as sharply as do those of the peasants and the landlords on the question of compensation. The socialist workers must therefore show especial perseverance in explaining to the peasants how important it is that the land question should not be handled by the old authorities. Let the peasants know that no agrarian reform whatever will

be of any use if it is handled by the old authorities. Happily, on this question too, agreement was reached at the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. as regards the substance of the matter, for the Congress resolution unreservedly recognised the necessity of supporting the revolutionary actions of the peasantry. True, the Congress in our opinion made a mistake by not stating plainly that the land reform can be entrusted only to a *fully* democratic state, only to government officials who are elected by, accountable to, and subject to recall by, the people. But we intend to deal with this point in greater detail on another occasion.

In the Duma, two main agrarian programmes will be proposed. The Cadets, who predominate in the Duma, want the landlords to have their own way without harm to the peasants. They agree to the compulsory alienation of a large part of the landed estates, but first, they stipulate compensation, and secondly, they want a liberal-bureaucratic and not a revolutionary-peasant settlement of the question of the ways and means of carrying out the agrarian reform. In their agrarian programme the Cadets, as always, wriggle like eels between the landlords and the peasants, between the old authorities and people's freedom.

The Trudovik, or Peasant, Group has not yet definitely formulated its agrarian programme. It urges that all the land must belong to the working people; but for the time being it says nothing about compensation, or about the question of the old authorities. We shall have more than one occasion to discuss this programme when it is definitely formulated.

The bureaucratic government, of course, refuses to consider even a Cadet agrarian reform. The bureaucratic government, which is headed by some of the richest landlord-bureaucrats, many of them owning tens of thousands of dessiatines of land each, "would sooner accept the Mohammedan faith" (as a certain writer wittily expressed it) than agree to the compulsory alienation of the landed estates. Thus the *"settlement"* of the agrarian question by

the Duma will not be a settlement in the true sense of the term, but only a proclamation, only a declaration of demands. In the case of the Cadets, we shall again hear timid requests instead of the proud and bold, honest and open demands befitting representatives of the people. Let us hope that at least on this occasion the Trudovik Group will come out quite independently of the Cadets.

As for the socialist workers, they now have a particularly important duty to fulfil. In all ways and with all their strength they should enlarge their organisation in general, and their contacts with the peasantry in particular. They should explain to the peasants–as widely, clearly, minutely and circumstantially as possible–the significance of the question of compensation and of whether they can put up with leaving the agrarian reform in the hands of the old authorities. They must strain every nerve to strengthen and enlarge the alliance between the socialist proletariat and the revolutionary peasantry, in preparation for the inevitable climax of the present political crisis. This alliance is the only earnest that the question of "all the land" for the peasants, and of full freedom and complete power for the people, will be effectively settled.

Volna No. 15,
May 12, 1906

Vol. 10, pp. 414-17

THE ESSENCE OF "THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM IN RUSSIA"

An "agrarian problem"–to use this common and accepted term–exists in all capitalist countries. In Russia, however, there exists, *alongside* the general capitalist agrarian problem, *another*, "truly Russian" agrarian problem. As a brief indication of the difference between the two agrarian problems, we may point out that no civilised capitalist country has any widespread democratic movement of small landowners for the transfer of big landed estates into their hands.

In Russia there is such a movement. Accordingly, in no European country, except Russia, do the Marxists put forward or support the demand for the transfer of the land to the small landowners. An inevitable effect of the agrarian problem in Russia is that *all* Marxists recognise this demand, despite disagreements over the *manner* in which tenure and disposal of the transferred land should be organised (division, municipalisation, nationalisation).

Why the difference between "Europe" and Russia? Is it due to the distinctive character of Russia's development, to the absence of capitalism in Russia, or to the special hopelessness and irremediability of our capitalism? That is what the Narodniks of various shades think. But this view is radically wrong, and events disproved it long ago.

The difference between "Europe" and Russia stems from Russia's extreme backwardness. In the West, the bourgeois agrarian system is fully established, feudalism

was swept away long ago, and its survivals are negligible and play no serious role. The predominant type of social relationship in Western agriculture is that between the *wage-labourer* and the employer, the farmer or landowner. The small cultivators occupy an intermediary position, some of them passing into the class of those who hire themselves out, who sell their labour-power (the numerous forms of the peasant's so-called auxiliary work or subsidiary earnings), while others pass into the class of those who hire (the number of labourers hired by small cultivators is much greater than is generally believed).

Undoubtedly, a system of agriculture just as capitalist has already become firmly established and is steadily developing in Russia. It is in this direction that both landlord and peasant farming is developing. But purely capitalist relations in our country are still overshadowed to a *tremendous* extent by *feudal* relations. The distinctive character of the Russian agrarian problem lies in the struggle which the mass of the population, above all of the peasantry as a whole, are waging against these relations. In the West *this* kind of "problem" existed everywhere in olden days, but it was solved there long ago. In Russia, its solution has been delayed–the problem was not solved by the agrarian "Reform" of 1861, *nor can* it be solved under present conditions by the Stolypin agrarian policy.[9]

In the article "Landownership in European Russia" (*Nevskaya Zvezda*[10] No. 3), we cited the main data revealing the nature of the agrarian problem in present-day Russia.

About 70 million dessiatines of land owned by 30,000 of the biggest landlords, and about as much owned by 10 million peasant households–such is the main background of the picture. What are the economic relations to which this picture testifies?

The 30,000 big landlords represent chiefly the old landed nobility and the old feudal economy. Of the 27,833 owners of estates exceeding 500 dessiatines each, 18,102, or *nearly two-thirds*, are members of the nobility. The huge latifundia in their possession–each of these big land-

lords owns an average of more than 2,000 dessiatines!—cannot be cultivated with the implements, livestock and hired labour at the disposal of the owners. That being so, the old corvée system is largely inevitable, and this means small-scale cultivation, small-scale farming, on the big latifundia, the cultivation of the landlords' land with the implements and livestock of the small peasants.

This corvée system is especially widespread, as we know, in the central, traditionally Russian, gubernias of European Russia, in the *heart* of our agriculture. So-called labour rent[11] is nothing but a direct continuation and survival of the corvée system. The farming methods based on impossible terms of bondage, such as winter hiring,[12] work for the cut-off land, "composite labour-service"[13] and so on and so forth, are also part of the corvée system. Under this system of farming, the peasant "allotment" is a means of supplying the *landlord* with farm hands, and not only with farm hands but also with implements and livestock, which, wretched though they are, serve to cultivate the landlords' land.

Dire poverty of the mass of the peasantry, who are tied to their allotments but cannot subsist on them, extremely primitive agricultural techniques, and the extreme inadequacy of the home market for industry—such are the results of this state of affairs. And the present famine affecting 30 million peasants is the most striking proof that at bottom, in substance, this state of affairs has remained unchanged to this day. Only the serf-like downtroddenness, distress and helplessness of the mass of small proprietors in bondage *can* lead to such frightful mass starvation in an epoch of rapidly developing agricultural techniques, which have already achieved a relatively high standard (on the best capitalist farms).

The fundamental contradiction leading to such terrible calamities, which have been unknown to the peasants of Western Europe since the Middle Ages, is the contradiction between capitalism, which is highly developed in our industry and considerably developed in our agriculture, and the *system of landownership*, which remains medie-

val, feudal. There is no way out of this situation unless the old system of landownership is radically broken up.

Not only the landed property of the landlords, but that of the peasants as well is based on feudal relations. In the case of the former, this is so obvious as to arouse no doubts. We need only note that the abolition of the feudal latifundia, say, of those exceeding 500 dessiatines, will not undermine large-scale *production* in agriculture but will, indeed, increase and develop it. For the feudal latifundia are bulwarks of *small-scale* farming based on bondage, and not of large-scale production. In most regions of Russia it is practically impossible or, at all events, exceedingly difficult to run *large farms* taking up as much as 500 or more dessiatines of land with the implements and livestock of the owner and with wage-labour. A *reduction* in the size of such estates is one of the conditions for small-scale farming on terms of bondage going out of existence and for agriculture passing to large-scale capitalist production.

On the other hand, the allotment form of peasant land tenure in Russia also retains medieval, feudal features. And it is not only a question of the juridical form, which is now being changed, in sergeant-major fashion, through the destruction of the village commune and the introduction of private landownership; it is also a question of the *actual* nature of this ownership, which is unaffected by any break-up of the commune.

The actual condition of the vast mass of peasants holding small and dwarf "parcels" (= tiny plots of land), consisting mostly of several narrow strips far removed from each other and distinguished by soil of the poorest quality (due to the delimitation of the peasant land in 1861 under the supervision of the feudal landlords, and due to the exhaustion of the land), inevitably places them in a relation of bondage to the hereditary owner of the latifundium, the old "master".

Just keep clearly in mind the following picture: as against 30,000 owners of latifundia of 2,000 dessiatines each, there are 10,000,000 peasant households with 7 des-

siatines of land per "average" household. It is obvious that no matter what destruction of the village commune and creation of private landownership takes place, this will *still not* be able to change the bondage, labour rent, corvée, feudal poverty, and feudal forms of dependence, stemming from this state of affairs.

The "agrarian problem" resulting from such a situation is the problem of doing away with the survivals of serfdom, which have become an intolerable obstacle to Russia's capitalist development. The agrarian problem in Russia is one of radically breaking up the old, medieval forms of landownership, both that of the landlords and that of the allotment peasants–a break-up which has become absolutely indispensable in view of the extreme backwardness of this landownership, in view of the extreme disharmony between it and the whole system of the national economy, which has become capitalist.

It must be a radical break-up, because the disharmony is too great, the old is too old, and "the disease too neglected". In any event and in all its forms, this break-up is bound to be bourgeois in content, since Russia's entire economic life is already bourgeois, and the system of landownership is certain to become subordinate to it, to adapt itself to the dictates of the market, to the pressure of capital, which is omnipotent in our society today.

But while the break-up cannot fail to be radical and bourgeois, there is still this question to be answered: *which* of the two classes directly concerned, the landlords or the peasants, will carry out this change or direct it, determine its forms? Our next article, "A Comparison of the Stolypin and the Narodnik Agrarian Programmes", will deal with this "unsolved problem".

Nevskaya Zvezda No. 6,
May 22, 1912
Signed: R.S.

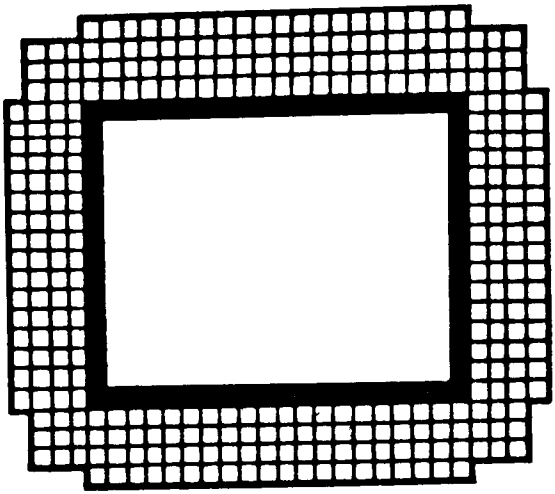
Vol. 18, pp. 73-77

BIG LANDLORD AND SMALL PEASANT LANDOWNERSHIP IN RUSSIA

In connection with the recent anniversary of February 19, 1861,[14] a reminder of the present distribution of land in European Russia will not be out of place.

The last official statistics of land distribution in European Russia were published by the Ministry of the Interior and date from 1905.

According to these statistics there were (in round numbers) about 30,000 big landlords owning over 500 dessiatines each, their total land amounting to about 70,000,000 dessiatines.



Some 10,000,000 poor peasant households owned the *same amount* of land.

It follows that on the average there are about 330 poor peasant families for each big landlord, each peasant family owning about 7 (*seven*) dessiatines, while each big landlord owns about 2,300 (*two thousand three hundred*) dessiatines.

To show this graphically, we have drawn the above diagram.

The large white rectangle in the middle stands for the estate of a big landlord. The small squares around it represent the small peasant holdings.

Altogether there are 324 squares, and the area of the white rectangle equals 320 squares.

Pravda No. 51,
March 2, 1913

Vol. 18, pp. 586-87

DEMOCRACY AND NARODISM IN CHINA

The article by Sun Yat-sen provis onal Pres dent of the Chinese Repub c wh ch we take from the Brusse s socia st newspaper *Le Peuple* [5] s of exceptional interest to us Russ ans

It s said that the onlooker sees most of the game And Sun Yat-sen s a most nteresting onlooker' for he appears to be who y uninformed about Russ a desp te his European education And now qui e ndependently of Russ a of Russ an experience and Russ an literature this en ghtened spokesman of m tant and victorious Chinese democracy which has won a repub c poses pure y Russ an questions A progress ve Chinese democrat he argues exact y like a Russ an H s s m arity to a Russ an Narod n k s so great that t goes as far as a comp ete dentity of fundamental deas and of many individual express ons

The on ooker sees most of the game The p atform of the great Chinese democracy–for that s what Sun Yat sen s article represents– mpe s us and provides us with a convenient occas on to exam ne anew n the light of recent wor d events the re ation between democracy and Narodism in modern bourgeo s revo utions in As a This s one of the most serious questions confronting Russ a in the revo utionary epoch which began n 1905 And t confronts not only Russia but the who e of As a as will be seen from the p atform of the provis onal Pres dent of the Chinese Republic particular y when this platform s com

pared with the revolutionary developments in Russia, Turkey, Persia and China. In very many and very essential respects, Russia is undoubtedly an Asian country and, what is more, one of the most benighted, medieval and shamefully backward of Asian countries.

Beginning with its distant and lone forerunner, the nobleman Herzen, and continuing right up to its mass representatives, the members of the Peasant Union of 1905 and the Trudovik deputies to the first three Dumas of 1906-12, Russian bourgeois democracy has had a Narodnik colouring. Bourgeois democracy in China, as we now see, has the same Narodnik colouring. Let us now consider, with Sun Yat-sen as an example, the "social significance" of the ideas generated by the deep-going revolutionary movement of the hundreds of millions who are finally being drawn into the stream of world capitalist civilisation.

Every line of Sun Yat-sen's platform breathes a spirit of militant and sincere democracy. It reveals a thorough understanding of the inadequacy of a "racial" revolution. There is not a trace in it of indifference to political issues, or even of underestimation of political liberty, or of the idea that Chinese "social reform", Chinese constitutional reforms, etc., could be compatible with Chinese autocracy. It stands for complete democracy and the demand for a republic. It squarely poses the question of the condition of the masses, of the mass struggle. It expresses warm sympathy for the toiling and exploited people, faith in their strength and in the justice of their cause.

Before us is the truly great ideology of a truly great people capable not only of lamenting its age-long slavery and dreaming of liberty and equality, but of *fighting* the age-long oppressors of China.

One is naturally inclined to compare the provisional President of the Republic in benighted, inert, Asiatic China with the presidents of various republics in Europe and America, in countries of advanced culture. The presidents in *those* republics are all businessmen, agents or puppets of a bourgeoisie rotten to the core and besmirched from

head to foot with mud and blood–not the blood of padishahs and emperors, but the blood of striking workers shot down in the name of progress and civilisation. In those countries the presidents represent the bourgeoisie, which long ago renounced all the ideals of its youth, has thoroughly prostituted itself, sold itself body and soul to the millionaires and multimillionaires, to the feudal lords turned bourgeois, etc.

In China, the Asiatic provisional President of the Republic is a revolutionary democrat, endowed with the nobility and heroism of a class that is rising, not declining, a class that does not dread the future, but believes in it and fights for it selflessly, a class that does not cling to maintenance and restoration of the past in order to safeguard its privileges, but hates the past and knows how to cast off its dead and stifling decay.

Does that mean, then, that the materialist West has decayed and that light shines only from the mystic, religious East? No, quite the opposite. It means that the East has definitely taken the Western path, that new *hundreds of millions* of people will from now on share in the struggle for the ideals which the West has already worked out for itself. What has decayed is the Western bourgeoisie, which is already confronted by its grave-digger, the proletariat. But in Asia there is *still* a bourgeoisie capable of championing sincere, militant, consistent democracy, a worthy comrade of France's great men of Enlightenment and great leaders of the close of the eighteenth century.

The chief representative, or the chief social bulwark, of this Asian bourgeoisie that is still capable of supporting a historically progressive cause, is the peasant. And side by side with him there already exists a liberal bourgeoisie whose leaders, men like Yüan Shih-kai, are above all capable of treachery: yesterday they feared the emperor, and cringed before him; then they betrayed him when they saw the strength, and sensed the victory, of the revolutionary democracy; and tomorrow they will betray the democrats to make a deal with some old or new "constitutional" emperor.

The real emancipation of the Chinese people from age-long slavery would be impossible without the great, sincerely democratic enthusiasm which is rousing the working masses and making them capable of miracles, and which is evident from every sentence of Sun Yat-sen's platform.

But the Chinese Narodnik combines this ideology of militant democracy, firstly, with socialist dreams, with hopes of China avoiding the capitalist path, of preventing capitalism, and, secondly, with a plan for, and advocacy of, radical agrarian reform. It is these two last ideological and political trends that constitute the element which forms *Narodism*–Narodism in the specific sense of that term, i.e., as distinct from democracy, as a supplement to democracy.

What is the origin and significance of these trends?

Had it not been for the immense spiritual and revolutionary upsurge of the masses, the Chinese democracy would have been unable to overthrow the old order and establish the republic. Such an upsurge presupposes and evokes the most sincere sympathy for the condition of the working masses, and the bitterest hatred for their oppressors and exploiters. And in Europe and America–from which the progressive Chinese, *all* the Chinese who have experienced this upsurge, have borrowed their ideas of liberation–emancipation *from* the bourgeoisie, i.e., socialism, is the immediate task. This is bound to arouse sympathy for socialism among Chinese democrats, and is the source of their *subjective* socialism.

They are subjectively socialists because they are opposed to oppression and exploitation of the masses. But the *objective* conditions of China, a backward, agricultural, semi-feudal country numbering nearly 500 million people, place on the order of the day only one specific, historically distinctive form of this oppression and exploitation, namely, feudalism. Feudalism was based on the predominance of agriculture and natural economy. The source of the feudal exploitation of the Chinese peasant was his *attachment* to the land in some form. The political expo-

nents of this exploitation were the feudal lords, all together and individually, with the emperor as the head of the whole system.

But it appears that out of the subjectively socialist ideas and programmes of the Chinese democrat there emerges in fact a programme for "changing all the juridical foundations" of "immovable property" *alone*, a programme for the abolition of feudal exploitation *alone*.

That is the *essence* of Sun Yat-sen's Narodism, of his progressive, militant, revolutionary programme for bourgeois-democratic agrarian reform, and of his quasi-socialist theory.

From the point of view of doctrine, this theory is that of a petty-bourgeois "socialist" reactionary. For the idea that capitalism can be "prevented" in China and that a "social revolution" there will be made easier by the country's backwardness, and so on, is altogether reactionary. And Sun Yat-sen himself, with inimitable, one might say virginal, naïveté, smashes his reactionary Narodnik theory by admitting what reality forces him to admit, namely, that "China is on the eve of a gigantic industrial [i.e., capitalist]* development", that in China "trade [i.e., capitalism] will develop to an enormous extent", that "in fifty years we shall have many Shanghais", i.e., huge centres of capitalist wealth and proletarian need and poverty.

But the question arises: does Sun Yat-sen, on the basis of his reactionary economic theory, uphold an actually reactionary agrarian programme? That is the crux of the matter, its most interesting point, and one *on* which curtailed and emasculated liberal quasi-Marxism is often at a loss.

The fact of the matter is that he does not. The dialectics of the social relations in China reveals itself precisely in the fact that, while sincerely sympathising with socialism in Europe, the Chinese democrats have transformed it into a reactionary theory, and *on the basis* of this reactionary

* Interpolations in square brackets (within passages quoted by Lenin) have been introduced by Lenin, unless otherwise indicated. *–Ed.*

theory of "preventing" capitalism are championing a *purely capitalist*, maximum capitalist, agrarian programme!

Indeed, what does the "economic revolution", of which Sun Yat-sen talks so pompously and obscurely at the beginning of his article, amount to?

It amounts to the transfer of rent to the state, i.e., land nationalisation, by some sort of single tax along Henry George lines. There is absolutely nothing else that is *real* in the "economic revolution" proposed and advocated by Sun Yat-sen.

The difference between the value of land in some remote peasant area and in Shanghai is the difference in the rate of rent. The value of land is capitalised rent. To make the "enhanced value" of land the "property of the people" means transferring the rent, i.e., landownership, to the state, or, in other words, nationalising the land.

Is such a reform possible within the framework of capitalism? It is not only possible but it represents the purest, most consistent, and ideally perfect capitalism. Marx pointed this out in *The Poverty of Philosophy*, he proved it in detail in Volume III of *Capital*, and developed it with particular clarity in his controversy with Rodbertus in *Theories of Surplus Value*.

Land nationalisation makes it possible to abolish absolute rent, leaving only differential rent. According to Marx's theory, land nationalisation means a maximum elimination of medieval monopolies and medieval relations in agriculture, maximum freedom in buying and selling land, and maximum facilities for agriculture to adapt itself to the market. The irony of history is that Narodism, under the guise of "combating capitalism" in agriculture, champions an agrarian programme that, if fully carried out, would mean the *most* rapid development of capitalism in agriculture.

What economic necessity is behind the spread of the most progressive bourgeois-democratic agrarian programmes in one of the most backward peasant countries of Asia? It is the necessity of destroying feudalism in all its forms and manifestations.

The more China lagged behind Europe and Japan, the more it was threatened with fragmentation and national disintegration. It could be "renovated" only by the heroism of the revolutionary masses, a heroism capable of creating a Chinese republic in the sphere of politics, and of ensuring, through land nationalisation, the most rapid capitalist progress in the sphere of agriculture.

Whether and to what extent this will succeed is another question. In their bourgeois revolutions, various countries achieved various degrees of political and agrarian democracy, and in the most diverse combinations. The decisive factors will be the international situation and the alignment of the social forces in China. The emperor will certainly try to unite the feudal lords, the bureaucracy and the clergy in an attempt at restoration. Yüan Shih-kai, who represents a bourgeoisie that has only just changed from liberal-monarchist to liberal-republican (for how long?), will pursue a policy of manoeuvring between monarchy and revolution. The revolutionary bourgeois democracy, represented by Sun Yat-sen, is correct in seeking ways and means of "renovating" China through maximum development of the initiative, determination and boldness of the peasant masses in the matter of political and agrarian reforms.

Lastly, the Chinese proletariat will increase as the number of Shanghais increases. It will probably form some kind of Chinese Social-Democratic labour party which, while criticising the petty-bourgeois utopias and reactionary views of Sun Yat-sen, will certainly take care to single out, defend and develop the revolutionary-democratic core of his political and agrarian programme.

Nevskaya Zvezda No. 17,
July 15, 1912
Signed: *Vl. Ilyin*

Vol. 18, pp. 163-69

TWO UTOPIAS

Utopia is a Greek word, composed of *ou*, not, and *topos*, a place. It means a place which does not exist, a fantasy, invention or fairy-tale.

In politics utopia is a wish that can never come true—neither now nor afterwards, a wish that is not based on social forces and is not supported by the growth and development of political, class forces.

The less freedom there is in a country, the scantier the manifestations of open class struggle and the lower the educational level of the *masses*, the more easily political utopias usually arise and the longer they persist.

In modern Russia, two kinds of political utopia have been most persistent and they exert a certain influence on the masses owing to their appeal. They are the liberal utopia and the Narodnik utopia.

The liberal utopia alleges that one could bring about appreciable improvements in Russia, in her political liberty, and in the condition of the mass of her working people, peacefully and harmoniously, without hurting anyone's feelings, without removing the Purishkeviches,[16] without a ruthless class struggle fought to a finish. It is the utopia of *peace* between a free Russia and the Purishkeviches.

The Narodnik utopia is a dream of the Narodnik intellectuals and Trudovik peasants who imagine that a new and just division of the land could *abolish* the power and

rule of capital and do away with wage slavery, or that a "just", "equalised" division of the land could be *maintained* under the domination of capital, under the rule of money, under commodity production.

What is it that gives rise to these utopias? Why do they persist rather strongly in present-day Russia?

They are engendered by the interests of the classes which are waging a struggle against the old order, serfdom, lack of rights–in a word, "against the Purishkeviches", and which do not occupy an independent position in this struggle. Utopia, or day-dreaming, is a product of this lack of independence, this *weakness*. Day-dreaming is the lot of the *weak*.

The liberal bourgeoisie in general, and the liberal-bourgeois intelligentsia in particular, cannot but strive for liberty and legality, since without these the domination of the bourgeoisie is incomplete, is neither undivided nor guaranteed. But the bourgeoisie is *more* afraid of the movement of the masses than of reaction. Hence the striking, incredible *weakness* of the liberals in politics, their absolute impotence. Hence the endless series of equivocations, falsehoods, hypocrisies and cowardly evasions in the entire policy of the liberals, who *have to* play at democracy to win the support of the masses but at the same time are deeply anti-democratic, deeply hostile to the movement of the masses, to their initiative, their way of "storming heaven", as Marx once described one of the mass movements in Europe in the last century.[17]

The utopia of liberalism is a utopia of impotence in the matter of the political emancipation of Russia, a utopia of the self-interested moneybags who want "peacefully" to share privileges with the Purishkeviches and pass off this noble desire as the theory of "peaceful" victory for Russian democracy. The liberal utopia means day-dreaming about how to beat the Purishkeviches without defeating them, how to break them without hurting them. Clearly, *this* utopia is harmful not only because it is a utopia, but also because it *corrupts* the democratic consciousness of the masses. If they believe in *this* utopia, the masses

will never win freedom; they are not worthy of freedom; they fully deserve to be maltreated by the Purishkeviches.

The utopia of the Narodniks and Trudoviks is the day-dreaming of the petty proprietor, who stands midway between the capitalist and the wage-worker, about abolishing wage slavery without a class struggle. When the issue of economic emancipation becomes as close, immediate and *burning* for Russia as the issue of political emancipation is today, the utopia of the Narodniks will prove *no less* harmful than that of the liberals.

But Russia is still in the period of her bourgeois and not proletarian transformation; it is not the question of the economic emancipation of the proletariat that has *most completely* matured, but the question of political liberty, i.e. (in effect), of complete bourgeois liberty.

And in this latter question, the Narodnik utopia plays a peculiar historical role. Being a utopia in regard to the economic consequences that a new division of the land should (and would) have, it is an accompaniment *and symptom* of the great, mass *democratic* upsurge of the peasant masses, i.e., the masses that constitute the *majority* of the population in bourgeois-feudal, modern, Russia. (In a purely bourgeois Russia, as in purely bourgeois Europe, the peasantry will not form the majority of the population.)

The liberal utopia corrupts the democratic consciousness of the masses. The Narodnik utopia, which corrupts their *socialist* consciousness, is an accompaniment, a symptom, and in part even an expression of their democratic upsurge.

The dialectics of history is such that the Narodniks and the Trudoviks propose and promote, as an anti-capitalist remedy, a highly consistent and thoroughgoing capitalist measure with regard to the agrarian question in Russia. An "equalised" new division of the land is utopian, yet a most complete rupture–a rupture indispensable for a *new* division–with the whole of the old landownership, whether landlord, allotment or "crown", is the most necessary, economically progressive and, for a state like Russia, most urgent measure towards bourgeois democracy.

We should remember Engels's notable dictum:

"What formally may be economically incorrect, may all the same be correct from the point of view of world history."[18]

Engels advanced this profound thesis in connection with utopian socialism: that socialism was "fallacious" in the formal economic sense. That socialism was "fallacious" when it declared surplus value an *injustice* from the point of view of the laws of exchange. The theoreticians of bourgeois political economy were right, in objecting to *that* socialism, in the formal economic sense, for surplus value results from the laws of exchange quite "naturally", quite "justly".

But utopian socialism was *right* from the point of view of world history, for it was a symptom, an expression, a harbinger of the class which, born of capitalism, has by now, in the beginning of the twentieth century, become a mass force which can put an end to capitalism and is irresistibly advancing to this goal.

Engels's profound thesis must be borne in mind when appraising the present-day Narodnik or Trudovik utopia in Russia (perhaps not only in Russia but in a number of Asiatic countries going through bourgeois revolutions in the twentieth century).

Narodnik *democracy*, while fallacious from the formal economic point of view, is correct from the *historical* point of view; *this* democracy, while fallacious as a socialist utopia, is *correct* in terms of the peculiar, historically conditioned democratic struggle of the peasant masses which is an inseparable element of the bourgeois transformation and a condition for its complete victory.

The liberal utopia discourages the peasant masses from fighting. The Narodnik utopia expresses their aspiration to fight, and promises them a million blessings in the event of victory, while this victory will in fact yield them only a hundred blessings. But is it not natural that the millions who are marching to battle, who for ages have lived in unheard-of ignorance, want, poverty, squalor, abandon-

ment and downtroddenness, should magnify tenfold the fruits of an eventual victory?

The liberal utopia is a veil for the self-seeking desire of the new exploiters to share in the privileges of the old exploiters. The Narodnik utopia is an expression of the aspiration of the toiling millions of the petty bourgeoisie to put an end *altogether* to the old, feudal exploiters, but it also expresses the false hope that the new, capitalist exploiters can be abolished along with them.

Clearly, the Marxists, who are hostile to *all and every* utopia, must uphold the independence of the class which can fight feudalism *with supreme devotion* precisely because it is not even one-hundredth part involved in property ownership which makes the bourgeoisie a half-hearted opponent, and often an ally, of the feudal lords. The peasants are involved in small commodity production; given a favourable conjuncture of historical circumstances, they *can* achieve the most complete abolition of feudalism, but they will *always*–inevitably and not accidentally–show a certain vacillation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, between liberalism and Marxism.

Clearly, the Marxists must carefully extract the sound and valuable kernel of the sincere, resolute, militant democracy of the peasant masses from the husk of Narodnik utopias.

In the old Marxist literature of the eighties one can discover systematic effort to extract this valuable democratic kernel. Some day historians will study this effort systematically and trace its connection with what in the first decade of the twentieth century came to be called "Bolshevism".

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Signed: *V.I.*

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DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE AGRARIAN QUESTION ADOPTED BY THE FIRST ALL-RUSSIA CONGRESS OF PEASANTS' DEPUTIES

1. All landed estates and privately-owned lands, as well as crown[19] and church lands, etc., are to be turned over immediately to the people without any compensation.

2. The peasantry must in an organised manner, through their Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, immediately take over all the land in their localities for the purpose of its economic exploitation, without however in any way prejudicing thereby the final establishment of land regulations by the Constituent Assembly or by the All-Russia Council of Soviets, should the people decide to vest the central power of the state in such a Council of Soviets.

3. Private property in land must be abolished altogether, i.e., all the land shall belong only to the nation as a whole, and its disposal shall be placed in the hands of the local democratic institutions.

4. The peasants must reject the advice of the capitalists and landowners and their Provisional Government to come to "an agreement" with the local landowners on the immediate disposal of the land; the disposal of all the land must be governed by the organised decision of the majority of the local peasants, and not by an agreement between the majority, i.e., the peasants, and the minority, and an insignificant minority at that, i.e., the landowners.

5. Not only the landowners are fighting and will continue to fight as hard as they can against the transfer of all landed estates to the peasants without compensation, but

also the capitalists, who wield great power both because of their money and because of their influence on the as yet unenlightened masses through the newspapers and the numerous officials, employees, etc., who are accustomed to the domination of capital. Hence, the transfer of all the landed estates to the peasantry without compensation cannot be carried through on a complete and secure basis unless the confidence of the peasant masses in the capitalists is destroyed, unless a close alliance is established between the peasantry and the urban workers, and unless state power is taken over completely by the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', and other Deputies. Only state power wielded by such Soviets and administering the state not through a police, or a bureaucracy, or a standing army isolated from the people, but through a nation-wide, universal and armed militia of the workers and peasants, can guarantee the realisation of the above-mentioned agrarian reforms, which are being demanded by the entire peasantry.

6. Agricultural labourers and poor peasants, i.e., those who, because of the lack of sufficient land, cattle, and implements, earn a living partly by working for hire, must strive their hardest to organise themselves independently into separate Soviets, or into separate groups within the general peasants' Soviets, in order to protect their interests against the rich peasants, who inevitably strive towards an alliance with the capitalists and landowners.

7. As a result of the war, Russia, like all other belligerent and many neutral (non-belligerent) countries, is facing an economic debacle, disaster and famine owing to the shortage of workers, coal, iron, etc. The only way to save the country is by the workers' and peasants' deputies assuming control and management of the entire production and distribution of goods. It is therefore necessary to proceed immediately to arrange agreements between Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and Soviets of Workers' Deputies on the exchange of grain and other rural products for implements, footwear, clothing, etc., without the medium of the capitalists, who must be removed from the management

of the factories. With the same purpose in view, the peasant committees must be encouraged to take over the livestock and implements of the landowners, such livestock and implements to be used in common. Similarly, the conversion of all large landed estates into model farms must be encouraged, the land to be cultivated collectively with the aid of the best implements under the direction of agricultural experts and in accordance with the decision of the local Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.

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FROM A PUBLICIST'S DIARY

PEASANTS AND WORKERS

Izvestia Vserossiiskogo Soveta Krestyanskikh Deputatov[20] No. 88, of August 19, carries an exceedingly interesting article which should be regarded as basic material for every Party propaganda and agitation worker who has anything to do with the peasants and for every class-conscious worker who is going to the countryside or comes in contact with peasants.

The article is entitled "Model Mandate Compiled on the Basis of 242 Mandates Submitted by Local Deputies to the First All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies Held in Petrograd, 1917".

The best thing would be for the Congress of Peasants' Deputies to publish as much detailed information as possible about all those mandates (if it is absolutely impossible to print them all in full, which, of course, would be preferable). It is particularly necessary, for instance, to have a full list of the gubernias, uyezds and volosts,* showing how many mandates have been received from each locality, when they were compiled or delivered, and to analyse at least the basic demands, so that we can tell whether the various points differ according to areas, whether such questions as abolition of private property rights to all *peasant* lands, periodic redistribution of land, prohibition of wage-labour, confiscation of the landowners' im-

* *Gubernia, uyezd, volost*–Russian administrative territorial units. The largest of these was the gubernia, divided into uyezds, which in turn were subdivided into volosts. This system continued under Soviet power until the introduction of the new system of administrative territorial divisions in 1929-30. –*Ed.*

plements and livestock, etc., etc., are put differently in, say, areas with homestead and communal landownership, areas with Russian and non-Russian populations, central and outlying areas, areas that never had serfdom, and so on. No thorough-going study of the extraordinarily valuable material contained in the peasant mandates is possible without such details. And we Marxists must exert every effort to make a thorough-going study of the facts underlying our policy.

In the absence of better material, and as long as it has not been proved factually incorrect in one respect or another, the *summary of the mandates* (as we shall call the "Model Mandate") remains the only material of its kind which, we repeat, is an absolute must for every Party member.

The first part of the summary is devoted to general political principles, to demands of political democracy; the second, to the land question. (It is to be hoped that the All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies or some other body will summarise the peasants' mandates and resolutions concerning the war.) Without going into detail in the first part, we shall note only two points from it, § 6, demanding the election of all office-holders, and § 11, calling for the abolition of the standing army once the war is over. These points bring the peasants' political programme *closest of all* to the Bolshevik Party programme. Basing ourselves on these points, we must stress and prove through all our propaganda and agitation that the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaders are traitors not only to socialism but also to democracy. In Kronstadt, for instance, contrary to the will of the population and to democratic principles, and to please the capitalists, they upheld the office of a commissar subject to *approval* by the government, that is, an office not purely elective. In the Petrograd district councils and in other local self-government bodies, the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik leaders, contrary to democratic principles, are fighting the Bolshevik demand for the immediate institution of workers' militia, to be succeeded by a popular militia.

According to the summary, the peasant land demands are primarily abolition of private ownership of all types of land, including the peasants' lands, without compensation; transfer of lands on which high-standard scientific farming is practised to the state or the communes; confiscation of all livestock and implements on the confiscated lands (peasants with little land are excluded) and their transfer to the state or the communes; a ban on wage-labour; equalised distribution of land among the working people, with periodical redistributions, and so on. In the transition period, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the peasants demand the *immediate* enactment of laws prohibiting the purchase and sale of land, abolition of laws concerning separation from the commune, farmsteads, etc., laws protecting forests, fisheries, etc., abolishing long-term and revising short-term leases, and so on.

You do not have to give these demands a lot of thought to see that it is absolutely impossible to realise them *in alliance* with the capitalists, without breaking completely with them, without waging the most determined and ruthless struggle against the capitalist class, without overthrowing its rule.

The Socialist-Revolutionaries are deceiving themselves and the peasants precisely by assuming and spreading the idea that these reforms, or *similar* reforms, are possible without overthrowing capitalist rule, without all state power being transferred to the proletariat, without the peasant poor supporting the most resolute, revolutionary measures of a proletarian state power against the capitalists. The significance of the appearance of a Left wing among the "Socialist-Revolutionaries" is that it proves there is a growing awareness of this deception within their party.

Indeed, confiscation of all private land means the confiscation of hundreds of millions in capital belonging to the banks to which the greater part of this land is mortgaged. How can any measure like this be taken without the revolutionary class overcoming the capitalists' resistance by revolutionary methods? Moreover, it is here a question of the most highly centralised capital of all, bank capital,

which is connected through billions of threads with all the nerve centres of the capitalist economy of a huge country and which can be defeated only by the no less centralised might of the urban proletariat.

Further, take the transfer of highly efficient farms to the state. Obviously, the "state" capable of taking them over and running them really and truly in the interests of the working people, and not in the interests of the officials and the capitalists themselves, must be a proletarian revolutionary state.

The confiscation of stud farms, etc., and then of all livestock and implements, is something more than striking one staggering blow after another at private ownership of the means of production. It means taking steps towards socialism, for the transfer of *livestock and implements* "to the exclusive use of the state or a commune" implies large-scale, socialist agriculture or at least socialist control over integrated small farms, socialist regulation of their economy.

And what about a "ban" on wage-labour? This is a meaningless phrase, helpless, unwittingly naïve wishful thinking on the part of downtrodden petty proprietors, who do not see that capitalist industry as a whole would come to a standstill if there were no reserve army of wage-labour in the countryside, that it is impossible to "ban" wage-labour in the villages while permitting it in the towns, and lastly, that to "ban" wage-labour means nothing but a step towards socialism.

Here we come to the fundamental question of the workers' attitude to the peasants.

A mass Social-Democratic workers' movement has existed in Russia for more than twenty years (if we begin with the great strikes of 1896). Throughout this long span of time, through two great revolutions, through the entire political history of Russia, runs the issue of whether the working class is to lead the peasants forward, to socialism, or whether the liberal bourgeoisie are to drag them back, to conciliation with capitalism.

The opportunist wing of the Social-Democrats has al-

ways reasoned by the worldly-wise formula: *since* the Socialist-Revolutionaries are petty bourgeois, "we" reject their philistine utopian views on socialism *in the name of* bourgeois rejection of socialism. Struveism[21] neatly replaces Marxism, and Menshevism slithers down to the role of a Cadet flunkey seeking to "reconcile" the peasants to bourgeois rule. The latest and most striking evidence of that role is that Tsereteli and Skobelev, hand in hand with Chernov and Avksentyev,[22] were busy signing the Cadets' reactionary landowner decrees in the name of "revolutionary democrats".

The revolutionary Social-Democrats, who have never renounced criticism of the petty-bourgeois illusions of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and *never entered into any bloc* with them except *against* the Cadets, work unremittingly *to wrest* the peasants away from Cadet influence, and in opposition to the philistine's utopian view of socialism, put forward the revolutionary proletarian road to socialism instead of liberal conciliation with capitalism.

Now that the war has speeded up developments fantastically, aggravated the crisis of capitalism to the utmost, and confronted the peoples with making an immediate choice between destruction and immediate determined strides towards socialism, the full depth of the gulf between semi-liberal Menshevism and revolutionary proletarian Bolshevism is clearly revealed over the practical issue of what action the tens of millions of peasants should take.

Accept the rule of capital *because* "we" are not yet ripe for socialism, the Mensheviks tell the peasants, substituting, incidentally, the abstract question of "socialism" in general for the concrete question of whether it is possible to heal the wounds inflicted by the war without decisive strides towards socialism.

Accept capitalism *because* the Socialist-Revolutionaries are petty-bourgeois utopians, the Mensheviks tell the peasants and rally together with the Socialist-Revolutionaries to support the Cadet government.

And the Socialist-Revolutionaries, beating their breast,

assure the peasants that they are against any peace with the capitalists, that they have never regarded the Russian revolution as a bourgeois revolution–and *therefore* enter into a bloc with the opportunist Social-Democrats and rally to support a bourgeois government. The Socialist-Revolutionaries sign all peasant programmes, however revolutionary, except that they do so not to carry them out, but to pigeon-hole them and deceive the peasants with the most non-committal promises, while actually pursuing for months a policy of compromise with the Cadets in the coalition government.

This crying, practical, direct, palpable betrayal of the peasants' interests by the Socialist-Revolutionaries radically alters the situation. We must take this change into account. It is not enough to conduct agitation against the Socialist-Revolutionaries in the old way, the way we did between 1902 and 1903, and 1905 and 1907. It is not enough to expose theoretically the petty-bourgeois illusions of "socialisation of land", "equalised land tenure", "a ban on wage-labour", etc.

That was on the eve of the bourgeois revolution, or before the bourgeois revolution's completion, and the task was primarily to carry it through to overthrow the monarchy.

Now the monarchy has been overthrown. The bourgeois revolution has been completed in so far as Russia has become a democratic republic with a government of Cadets, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. And the war in the past three years has pushed us a good thirty years ahead. It has forced on Europe universal labour service and the compulsory syndication of undertakings, caused hunger and unprecedented ravages in the leading countries, and imposed steps towards socialism.

The fundamental premise of our class policy at that time was that only the workers and peasants can overthrow the monarchy. And this premise was correct. February and March 1917 reaffirmed this.

The premise of our class policy today is that only the proletariat, leading the poor peasants (the semi-proleta-

rians, as our programme puts it), can end the war with a democratic peace, heal the war wounds, and initiate steps towards socialism which have become absolutely necessary and *urgent*.

It follows that the emphasis in our propaganda and agitation against the Socialist-Revolutionaries must be shifted to the fact that they have betrayed the peasants. They represent a minority of well-to-do farmers rather than the mass of the peasant poor. They are leading the peasants to an alliance with the capitalists, i.e., to subordination to them, rather than to an alliance with the workers. They have bartered the interests of the working and exploited people for ministerial posts and a bloc with the Mensheviks and Cadets.

History, accelerated by the war, has forged so far ahead that the old formulas have acquired a new meaning. "A ban on wage-labour" was formerly *only* an empty phrase bandied about by the petty-bourgeois intellectual. In the light of today, it means something different: the millions of peasant poor say in their 242 mandates that they want hired labour abolished but do not know how to do it. We know how. We know that this can be done only in alliance with the workers, under their leadership, against the capitalist, not through a compromise with them.

These are the changes that the basic line of our propaganda and agitation against the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the basic line we pursue in addressing the peasants, must now undergo.

The Socialist-Revolutionary Party has betrayed you, comrade peasants. It has betrayed the hovels and deserted to the palaces, if not the royal palaces, then those where the Cadets, those bitter enemies of the revolution, and particularly the peasant revolution, sit in the same government as the Chernovs, Peshekhonovs, and Avksentyevs.

Only the revolutionary proletariat, only the vanguard that unites it, the Bolshevik Party, can *actually* carry out the programme of the peasant poor which is put forward in the 242 mandates. For the revolutionary proletariat is *really* advancing to the abolition of wage-labour along the

only correct path, through the overthrow of capital and not by prohibiting the hiring of labourers, not through a "ban" on wage-labour. The revolutionary proletariat is really advancing to confiscation of land, implements, and agricultural technical establishments, to what the peasants want and what the Socialist-Revolutionaries *cannot* give them.

This is how the basic line pursued by the worker in addressing the peasant must now change. We workers can and will give you what the peasant poor want and are searching for without always knowing where and how to find it. We workers are upholding our own interests and at the same time the interests of the vast majority of the peasants *against the capitalists,* while the Socialist-Revolutionaries, allying themselves with the capitalists, are betraying these interests.

* * *

Let us recall what Engels said on the peasant question shortly before his death. He stressed that socialists have no intention whatever of expropriating the small peasants, and that the advantages of mechanised socialist agriculture will be made clear to them only *by force of example.*

The war has now confronted Russia in practice with a problem of exactly this order. There is a shortage of implements. They must be confiscated, and the highly efficient farms must not be "divided up".

The peasants have begun to realise this. Need has compelled them to do so. The war has compelled them, for there are no implements to be had anywhere. What there is must be thriftily husbanded. And large-scale farming means saving labour through the use of implements as well as many other things.

The peasants want to keep their small farms, to set equal standards for all, and to make readjustments on an equalitarian basis from time to time. Fine. No sensible socialist will differ with the peasant poor over this. If the land is confiscated, that *means* the domination of the banks has been undermined, if the implements are confiscated,

that *means* the domination of capital has been undermined–and in that case, *provided the proletariat rules centrally*, provided political power is taken over by the proletariat, the rest will come *by itself*, as a result of "force of example", prompted by experience.

The crux of the matter lies in political power passing into the hands of the proletariat. When this has taken place, everything that is essential, basic, fundamental in the programme set out in the 242 mandates *will become feasible*. Life will show what modifications it will undergo as it is carried out. This is an issue of secondary importance. We are not doctrinaires. Our theory is a guide to action, not a dogma.

We do not claim that Marx knew or Marxists know the road to socialism down to the last detail. It would be nonsense to claim anything of the kind. What we know is the direction of this road, and the class forces that follow it; the specific, practical details will come to light only through the *experience of the millions* when they take things into their own hands.

Trust the workers, comrade peasants, and break with the capitalists! Only in close alliance with the workers *can* you begin to carry out the programme set out in the 242 mandates. Allied with the capitalists and led by the Socialist-Revolutionaries, you will never live to see *a single* determined, radical step in the spirit of this programme.

But when in alliance with the urban workers, waging a ruthless struggle against capital, you *begin* to realise the programme of the 242 mandates, the whole world will come to our and your assistance, and then the success of that programme–not as it stands now, but in its essence–will be assured. When that happens, the domination of capital and wage slavery will come to an end. That will be the beginning of the reign of socialism, the reign of peace, the reign of the working people.

Rabochy No. 6,
September 11 (August 29), 1917
Signed: *N. Lenin*

Vol. 25, pp. 278-86

SOCIALIST-REVOLUTIONARY PARTY CHEATS THE PEASANTS ONCE AGAIN

The Socialist-Revolutionary Party has made a solemn and public announcement in its chief newspaper, *Dyelo Naroda*, of October 18 and 19, that the Minister of Agriculture's new land bill is a "major step towards the implementation of the Party's agrarian programme", and that the "Party's Central Committee insistently urges all Party organisations to launch a vigorous campaign in favour of the bill and popularise it among the masses".

Actually, however, this bill, produced by the Minister, S. L. Maslov, who is a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, and summarised in *Dyelo Naroda*, is a *fraud on the peasants*. The S.R. Party has deceived the peasants: it has crawled away from its own land bill and has adopted the plan of the landowners and Cadets for a "fair assessment" and preservation of landed proprietorship. At its congresses during the first Russian revolution (1905) and the second Russian revolution (1917), the S.R. Party solemnly and publicly committed itself to the peasant demand for *confiscation* of the landed estates, that is, for their transfer to the peasants *without compensation*. Under Mr. Maslov's present project, however, not only are the landed estates left intact but the *landlords are also to get* the "fairly" assessed rent paid by the peasants for the "leased" lands.

This bill of Mr. Maslov's is downright betrayal of the peasants by the S.R. Party, and signifies its complete subservience to the landed proprietors. The utmost must be done, every effort must be made to drive this fact home to the widest possible sections of peasants.

On October 18, *Dyelo Naroda* carried Clauses 25-40 of Maslov's bill. Here are its main points:

1) *Not all* landed estates are to go into the proposed "provisional lease pool".

2) Landed estates are pooled by *land committees* set up under the law of April 21, 1917, which was issued by Prince Lvov's government of *landed proprietors.*

3) The rent paid by the peasants for these tracts is to be fixed by the land committees "in accordance with the net income" and after deduction of various payments goes to the "rightful owner", *that is, the landed proprietor.*

This is a triple fraud worked on the peasants by the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and each of these three points must be dealt with in greater detail.

Izvestia Vserossiiskogo Soveta Krestyanskikh Deputatov No. 88, dated August 19, carries a "model mandate drawn up on the basis of 242 mandates submitted by deputies from various localities to the First All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies held in Petrograd in 1917".

This summary of 242 mandates, made by representatives of peasants in the localities, gives the *best* idea of *what the peasants want.* This summarised mandate shows very well that the project of Maslov and the S.R. Party is a swindle.

The peasants are demanding the abolition of the right to private ownership of land; the conversion of *all* private land holdings, etc., into the property of the whole people, without compensation; the conversion of land tracts farmed on a highly efficient level (orchards, plantations, etc.) into "model farms", their transfer to "the exclusive use of the state and the communes"; the confiscation of *"all* livestock and farm implements", etc.

Such is the clear-cut statement of the peasant demands based on 242 local mandates submitted by the peasants themselves.

But the S.R. Party, having entered "a coalition" (that is, an alliance or agreement) with the bourgeoisie (the capitalists) and the landowners, and taking part in the government of capitalists and landowners, has now pro-

duced a bill which *does not abolish landed property* but transfers *only a part* of the landed estates into a *provisional lease pool.*

Under the bill, *no* orchards, plantations, beet fields, etc., can go into the lease pool! *Nor* can the pool include lands required "to satisfy the needs of the owner, his family, employees and workers, or to ensure the maintenance of available livestock"!

This means that the great landowner who has a sugar refinery, a potato processing plant, oil or other mills, orchards and plantations, hundreds of head of cattle and dozens of employees and workers, is to retain *a great estate farmed on capitalist lines.* The S.R. Party has indeed cheated the peasants with exceptional brazenness.

Landed estates, or "privately held land", as the bill puts it, are to be transferred to the lease pool by *land committees* set up under the law of April 21, 1917, by the government of *landed proprietors* headed by *Prince Lvov* and Co., the selfsame government of Milyukov and Guchkov, the imperialists and plunderers of the masses, who were routed by the workers' and soldiers' movement in Petrograd on April 20 and 21, a full six months ago.

The land committee law issued by this government of landed proprietors is, of course, far from being a democratic (popular) law. On the contrary, it contains a whole series of outrageous departures from democracy. Take its Clause XI, which gives the "gubernia land committees the right to suspend decisions of the volost and uyezd committees, pending a final ruling by the central land committee". Under this swindling landowners' law, the committees are so constituted that the uyezd committee is less democratic than the volost committee, the gubernia committee is less democratic than the uyezd committee, and the central committee is less democratic than the gubernia committee.

The volost land committee is entirely elected by the population of the volost. Under the law, for instance, the uyezd committee must include the local magistrate and five members of "provisional executive committees" (pend-

ing the establishment of a new local government body). The gubernia committee includes a member of the circuit court and a magistrate, and also a representative of the ministry who is *appointed* by the minister, etc. The central land committee consists of 27 members "invited to sit on it by the Provisional Government"! This includes one each from the 11 political parties, with the majority (6 out of 11) going to the *Cadets and those to the right of them.* Isn't this an obvious swindle on the part of Lvov, Shingaryov (who signed the bill) and their friends? Isn't this simply flouting democracy to please the landed proprietors?

Does this not bear out the repeated Bolshevik statement that the will of the peasantry can be correctly expressed and implemented only by the *Soviets of Peasants' Deputies,* elected *by the mass of working people* and subject to recall at any time?

The Socialist-Revolutionaries, who were returned in a majority to the All-Russia Executive Committee of the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies by the unsuspecting peasants, have now *betrayed* them; they have *sold out* the peasant Soviets, *gone over to the landowners,* and accepted the land committee law of Prince Lvov, the landed proprietor. Therein lies the second big fraud which the Socialist-Revolutionaries have worked on the peasants.

This makes it all the more imperative for us, the workers' party, to reiterate the Bolshevik demand: all power in the countryside to the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and Agricultural Labourers' Deputies!

The peasant mandates demand the confiscation, that is, the alienation of landed estates *without compensation,* and the confiscation of stud farms, private pedigree stock-breeding and poultry farms, the transfer to state use of all highly efficient farms, and the confiscation of all livestock and implements on the landed estates.

Instead, the S.R. ministerial bill treats the peasants to *a preservation of rent,* which is still to go into landlords' coffers.

"Rent," says Clause 33 of the S.R. bill, "shall be paid to the committees, which shall hand over the remainder

[after various payments to the Treasury, etc.] to the rightful owner."

That is how the "Socialist-Revolutionaries", having cheated the peasants with fine promises, now present them with a *landowner-Cadet* land bill!

This is a swindle, pure and simple.

Nothing at all remains of the peasant demand for confiscation. This is not confiscation of landed estates, but *consolidation* of landed property by a "republican" government which *assures* the landowners *retention* of both implements and land for the maintenance of their "employees and workers", the retention of land "designated by the landowner [it's as easy as that!] for the planting of sugar-beet and other industrial crops", *and of payment* for the rest of the land which goes into the lease pool. The land committees are turned into *rent collectors* for the landed gentry!

The Socialist-Revolutionaries do not abolish but consolidate landed property. It is now abundantly clear that they have betrayed the peasants and have defected to the landowners.

The sly Cadets, these loyal friends of the capitalists and landowners, must not be allowed to bring off their fraud. The Cadets make believe that the S.R. bill is terribly "revolutionary", and there is a great outcry in all the bourgeois papers *against* it; they all report *"opposition"* on the part of the bourgeois ministers (and, of course, of their avowed hangers-on like Kerensky) to this "terrible" bill. The whole thing is a farce, a game; it is the bartering of a trader who expects to drive a harder bargain with the spineless Socialist-Revolutionaries. Actually, Maslov's is a *landowners'* bill drawn up *for the express purpose* of securing an agreement with them and saving them.

It is pure humbug for *Dyelo Naroda* to declare, as it does in these issues, that it is "an outstanding land bill inaugurating [!] a great [!!] reform in socialising [!!!] land". There is no trace of "socialisation" in the bill (save perhaps for the "social" help given the landlord in assuring him of his rent); there is not the least trace of anyth-

ing "revolutionary or democratic"; there is in fact nothing at all in it with the exception of the Irish-type "reforms"[23] which are a common feature of European *bourgeois reformism*.

Let me say this again: it is a bill *to save* the landowners, and *to "pacify"* the incipient peasant uprising by making concessions on trifles and allowing the landowners to keep what is important.

The fact that the Socialist-Revolutionaries have submitted such a mean bill to the government really shows the incredible hypocrisy of those who accuse the Bolsheviks of "frustrating" the Constituent Assembly with their plans for transferring power to the Soviets. "Only 40 days till the Constituent Assembly"—Cadets, capitalists, landowners, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, all have joined in this hypocritical cry. Meanwhile, they slip the government a sweeping land bill, *swindling* the peasants, *saddling* them with landlords, *consolidating* landed property.

When it comes to supporting the landowners against the mounting peasant uprising, a sweeping bill *can* be rushed through 40 and even 30 days before the Constituent Assembly is due to meet.

When it comes to transferring all power to the Soviets *in order* to hand over *all* the land to the peasants, *at once* abolish landed property and *at once* offer a just peace, then Cadets, capitalists, landowners, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries all join in the howl against the Bolsheviks.

The peasants must know how they have been cheated and betrayed to the landowners by the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

The peasants must know that it is only the *workers'* party, the *Bolsheviks*, who are prepared to stand to the last for the interests of the *poor* peasants and *all* working people *against* the capitalists and the landowners.

October 20, 1917

Published on November 6 (October 24), 1917, in *Rabochy Put* No. 44
Signed: *N. Lenin*

Vol. 26, pp. 228-33

REPORT ON LAND AT THE SECOND ALL-RUSSIA CONGRESS OF SOVIETS OF WORKERS' AND SOLDIERS' DEPUTIES OCTOBER 26 (NOVEMBER 8), 1917

We maintain that the revolution has proved and demonstrated how important it is that the land question should be put clearly. The outbreak of the armed uprising, the second, October, Revolution, clearly proves that the land must be turned over to the peasants. The government that has been overthrown and the compromising parties of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries committed a crime when they kept postponing the settlement of the land question on various pretexts and thereby brought the country to economic chaos and a peasant revolt. Their talk about riots and anarchy in the countryside sounds false, cowardly, and deceitful. Where and when have riots and anarchy been provoked by wise measures? If the government had acted wisely, and if their measures had met the needs of the poor peasants, would there have been unrest among the peasant masses? But all the measures of the government, approved by the Avksentyev and Dan[24] Soviets, went counter to the interests of the peasants and compelled them to revolt.

Having provoked the revolt, the government raised a hue and cry about riots and anarchy, for which they themselves were responsible. They were going to crush it by blood and iron, but were themselves swept away by the armed uprising of the revolutionary soldiers, sailors and workers. The first duty of the Government of the workers' and peasants' revolution must be to settle the land ques-

tion, which can pacify and satisfy the vast masses of poor peasants. I shall read to you the clauses of a decree your Soviet Government must issue. In one of the clauses of this decree is embodied the Mandate to the Land Committees, compiled on the basis of 242 mandates from local Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

DECREE ON LAND

1) Landed proprietorship is abolished forthwith without any compensation.

2) The landed estates, as also all crown, monastery, and church lands, with all their livestock, implements, buildings and everything pertaining thereto, shall be placed at the disposal of the volost land committees and the uyezd Soviets of Peasants' Deputies pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

3) All damage to confiscated property, which henceforth belongs to the whole people, is proclaimed a grave crime to be punished by the revolutionary courts. The uyezd Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures to assure the observance of the strictest order during the confiscation of the landed estates, to determine the size of estates, and the particular estates subject to confiscation, to draw up exact inventories of all property confiscated and to protect in the strictest revolutionary way all agricultural enterprises transferred to the people, with all buildings, implements, livestock, stocks of produce, etc.

4) The following peasant Mandate, compiled by the newspaper *Izvestia Vserossiiskogo Soveta Krestyanskikh Deputatov* from 242 local peasant mandates and published in No. 88 of that paper (Petrograd, No. 88, August 19, 1917), shall serve everywhere to guide the implementation of the great land reforms until a final decision on the latter is taken by the Constituent Assembly.

Peasant Mandate on the Land

"The land question in its full scope can be settled only by the popular Constituent Assembly.

"The most equitable settlement of the land question is to be as follows:

"(1) *Private ownership of land shall be abolished for ever;* land shall not be sold, purchased, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated.

"All land, whether *state, crown, monastery, church, factory,*[25] *entailed, private, public, peasant, etc., shall be confiscated without compensation* and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the use of all those who cultivate it.

"Persons who suffer by this property revolution shall be deemed to be entitled to public support only for the period necessary for adaptation to the new conditions of life.

"(2) All mineral wealth–ore, oil, coal, salt, etc., and also all forests and waters of state importance, shall pass into the exclusive use of the state. All the small streams, lakes, woods, etc., shall pass into the use of the communes, to be administered by the local self-government bodies.

"(3) Lands on which *high-level scientific* farming is practised–orchards, plantations, seed plots, nurseries, hothouses, etc.–*shall not be divided up, but shall be converted into model farms,* to be turned over for exclusive use *to the state or to the communes,* depending on the size and importance of such lands.

"Household land in towns and villages, with orchards and vegetable gardens, shall be reserved for the use of their present owners, the size of the holdings, and the size of tax levied for the use thereof, to be determined by law.

"(4) Stud farms, government and private pedigree stock-breeding and poultry farms, etc., shall be confiscated and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on the size and importance of such farms.

"The question of compensation shall be examined by the Constituent Assembly.

"(5) All livestock and farm implements of the confiscated estates shall pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on the size and importance, and no compensation shall be paid for this.

"The farm implements of peasants with little land shall not be subject to confiscation.

"(6) The right to use the land shall be accorded to all citizens of the Russian state (without distinction of sex) desiring to cultivate it by their own labour, with the help of their families, or in partnership, but only as long as they are able to cultivate it. The employment of hired labour is not permitted.

"In the event of the temporary physical disability of any member of a village commune for a period of up to two years, the village commune shall be obliged to assist him for this period by collectively cultivating his land until he is again able to work.

"Peasants who, owing to old age or ill-health, are permanently disabled and unable to cultivate the land personally, shall lose their right to the use of it but, in return, shall receive a pension from the state.

"(7) Land tenure shall be on an equality basis, i.e., the land shall be distributed among the working people in conformity with a labour standard or a subsistence standard, depending on local conditions.

"There shall be absolutely no restriction on the forms of land tenure–household, farm, communal, or co-operative, as shall be decided in each individual village and settlement.

"(8) All land, when alienated, shall become part of the national land fund. Its distribution among the peasants shall be in charge of the local and central self-government bodies, from democratically organised village and city communes, in which there are no distinctions of social rank, to central regional government bodies.

"The land fund shall be subject to periodical redistribution, depending on the growth of population and the increase in the productivity and the scientific level of farming.

"When the boundaries of allotments are altered, the original nucleus of the allotment shall be left intact.

"The land of the members who leave the commune shall revert to the land fund; preferential right to such land shall be given to the near relatives of the members who have left, or to persons designated by the latter.

"The cost of fertilisers and improvements put into the land, to the extent that they have not been fully used up at the time the allotment is returned to the land fund, shall be compensated.

"Should the available land fund in a particular district prove inadequate for the needs of the local population, the surplus population shall be settled elsewhere.

"The state shall take upon itself the organisation of resettlement and shall bear the cost thereof, as well as the cost of supplying implements, etc.

"Resettlement shall be effected in the following order: landless peasants desiring to resettle, then members of the commune who are of vicious habits, deserters, and so on, and, finally, by lot or by agreement."

The entire contents of this Mandate, as expressing the absolute will of the vast majority of the class-conscious peasants of all Russia, is proclaimed a provisional law, which, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assem

bly, shall be carried into effect as far as possible immediately, and as to certain of its provisions with due gradualness, as shall be determined by the uyezd Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

5) The land of ordinary peasants and ordinary Cossacks shall not be confiscated.

Voices are being raised here that the decree itself and the Mandate were drawn up by the Socialist-Revolutionaries. What of it? Does it matter who drew them up? As a democratic government, we cannot ignore the decision of the masses of the people, even though we may disagree with it. In the fire of experience, applying the decree in practice, and carrying it out locally, the peasants will themselves realise where the truth lies. And even if the peasants continue to follow the Socialist-Revolutionaries, even if they give this party a majority in the Constituent Assembly, we shall still say—what of it? Experience is the best teacher and it will show who is right. Let the peasants solve this problem from one end and we shall solve it from the other. Experience will oblige us to draw together in the general stream of revolutionary creative work, in the elaboration of new state forms. We must be guided by experience; we must allow complete freedom to the creative faculties of the masses. The old government, which was overthrown by armed uprising, wanted to settle the land problem with the help of the old, unchanged tsarist bureaucracy. But instead of solving the problem, the bureaucracy only fought the peasants. The peasants have learned something during the eight months of our revolution; they want to settle all land problems themselves. We are therefore opposed to all amendments to this draft law. We want no details in it, for we are writing a decree, not a programme of action. Russia is vast, and local conditions vary. We trust that the peasants themselves will be able to solve the problem correctly, properly, better than we could do it. Whether they do it in our spi-

rit or in the spirit of the Socialist-Revolutionary programme is not the point. The point is that the peasants should be firmly assured that there are no more landowners in the countryside, that they themselves must decide all questions, and that they themselves must arrange their own lives. (*Loud applause.*)

Izvestia No. 209,
October 28, 1917, and *Pravda*
No. 171,
November 10 (October 28), 1917

Vol. 26, pp. 257-61

REPLY TO QUESTIONS FROM PEASANTS[26]

In reply to numerous questions from peasants, be it known that all power in the country henceforth belongs wholly to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. The workers' revolution has won in Petrograd and Moscow and is winning everywhere else in Russia. The Workers' and Peasants' Government ensures the alliance of the mass of the peasants, the poor peasants, the majority of the peasants, with the workers against the landowners, against the capitalists.

Hence the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, primarily the uyezd and then the gubernia Soviets, are from now on, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, vested with full governmental authority in their localities. Landed proprietorship has been *abolished* by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets. A decree on land has already been issued by the present Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government. In conformity with this decree all landed estates pass over wholly to the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

The volost land committees must at once take over the administration of all landed estates, instituting the strictest accounting, maintaining perfect order and safeguarding with utmost strictness the former property of the landowners, which henceforth is the property of the whole people and which the people themselves must therefore protect.

All rulings of the volost land committees issued with the approval of the uyezd Soviets of Peasants' Deputies have the force of *law* and must be carried out unconditionally and without delay.

The Workers'and Peasants' Government appointed by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets has been named the Council of People's Commissars.

The Council of People's Commissars calls upon the peasants to take all power into their own hands in their respective localities. The workers give their full, undivided, all-round support to the peasants, are getting the production of machines and implements started, and ask the peasants to help by delivering grain.

V. Ulyanov (Lenin),

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars

Petrograd. November 5, 1917
Izvestia No. 219,
November 8, 1917

Vol. 26, pp. 299-300

SPEECH AT A MEETING OF DELEGATES FROM THE POOR PEASANTS' COMMITTEES[27] OF CENTRAL GUBERNIAS NOVEMBER 8, 1918

Comrades, the organisation of the poor peasants is the key problem in our internal construction work, and even in our whole revolution.

The aim of the October Revolution was to wrench the factories from the hands of the capitalists so as to make the means of production the property of the whole people, and to reconstruct agriculture on socialist lines by handing over the land to the peasants.

The first part of this aim was much easier to accomplish than the second. In the cities, the revolution was dealing with large-scale industry employing tens and hundreds of thousands of workers. The factories belonged to a small number of capitalists, who gave the workers little trouble. The workers had already gained experience in their long struggle against the capitalists, which had taught them to act concertedly, resolutely, and in an organised way. Moreover, they did not have to split up the factories; the thing that mattered was to make all production serve the interests of the working class and the peasants and see that the products of labour should not fall into capitalist hands.

But agriculture is quite a different proposition. A number of transitional measures are required if socialism is to win here. To transform a vast number of small peasant farms into large farms is something that cannot be done immediately. Agriculture, which has hitherto been con-

ducted on a haphazard basis, cannot immediately or in a short space of time be socialised and transformed into large-scale state enterprise, whose produce would be equally and justly distributed among all working people under a system of universal and equal labour service.

While the factory workers in the cities have already succeeded in completely overthrowing the capitalists and getting rid of exploitation, in the countryside the real fight against exploitation has only just begun.

After the October Revolution we finished off the landowner and took away his land. That, however, did not end the rural struggle. Gaining the land, like every other workers' gain, can only be secure when it is based on the independent action of the working people themselves, on their own organisation, on their endurance and revolutionary determination.

Did the working peasants have this organisation?

Unfortunately not. And that is the trouble, the reason why the struggle is so difficult.

Peasants who do not employ the labour of others, who do not profit at the expense of others, will, of course, always be in favour of the land being divided among all equally, of everybody working, of land tenure not serving as a basis of exploitation; they are against the concentration of land in the hands of a few. But it is different with the kulaks and the parasites who grew rich on the war, who took advantage of the famine to sell grain at fabulous prices, who concealed grain in anticipation of higher prices, and who are now doing all they can to grow rich on the people's misfortunes and on the starvation of the village poor and urban workers.

They, the kulaks and parasites, are no less formidable enemies than the capitalists and landowners. And if the kulaks are not dealt with properly, if we do not cope with the parasites, the return of the tsar and the capitalists is inevitable.

The experience of every revolution that has occurred in Europe offers striking corroboration of the fact that

revolution is inevitably doomed if the peasants do not throw off the domination of the kulaks.

Every European revolution ended in failure because the peasants could not cope with their enemies. In the cities the workers overthrew their kings (in England and France they executed their kings several centuries ago; it was only we who were late with out tsar), yet after a certain interval the old order came back. That was because in those days even in the cities there was no large-scale industry which could unite millions of workers in the factories and weld them into an army powerful enough to withstand the onslaught of the capitalists and the kulaks even without peasant support.

The poor peasants were unorganised, fought the kulaks badly, and as a result the revolution was defeated in the cities as well.

Now the situation is different. During the last two hundred years large-scale production has developed so powerfully and has covered all countries with such a network of huge factories employing thousands and tens of thousands of workers that today everywhere in the cities there are many organised workers, the proletarians, who constitute a force strong enough to achieve final victory over the bourgeoisie, the capitalists.

In former revolutions the poor peasants had nowhere to turn for support in their difficult struggle against the kulaks.

The organised proletariat–which is stronger and more experienced than the peasants (having gained experience in earlier struggles)–now holds power in Russia and possesses all the means of production, the mills, factories, railways, ships, etc.

Now the poor peasants have a reliable and powerful ally in their anti-kulak struggle. They know that the town is behind them, that the proletariat will help them, and is in fact already helping them with every means in its power. That has been shown by recent events.

You all remember, comrades, in what a dangerous situation the revolution was this July. The Czech revolt[28]

was spreading, the food shortage in the cities was worsening and the kulaks were becoming more insolent and violent than ever in their attacks on the towns, the Soviet government and the poor peasants.

We appealed to the poor peasants to organise. We proceeded to form Poor Peasants' Committees and organise workers' food detachments. The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries started an uprising. They said the Poor Peasants' Committees consisted of idlers and the workers were robbing the working peasants of grain.

We replied that they were defending the kulaks, who realised that the Soviet government could be fought by starvation as well as arms. They talked about "idlers". And we asked, "But why does an individual become an 'idler', why does he deteriorate, why is he impoverished, and why does he take to drink? Isn't it because of the kulaks?" The kulaks, in unison with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, raised an outcry against "idlers", but they themselves were raking in grain, concealing it and profiteering because they wanted to grow rich on the starvation and suffering of the workers.

The kulaks were squeezing the poor peasants dry. They were profiting from the labour of others, at the same time crying, "Idlers!"

The kulaks waited impatiently for the Czechs. They would most willingly have enthroned a new tsar so as to continue their exploitation with impunity, to continue to dominate the farm labourer and to continue to grow rich.

The only salvation was in the village uniting with the town, the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians(those who do not employ the labour of others) joining the town workers in a campaign against the kulaks and parasites.

To achieve this unity a great deal had to be done about the food situation. The workers in the towns were starving, while the kulak said: "If I hold my grain back a bit longer they may pay more."

The kulaks, of course, are in no hurry; they have plenty of money; they say themselves they have tons of Kerensky notes.[29]

But people who during famine can conceal and hoard grain are vicious criminals. They must be fought as the worst enemies of the people.

And we have begun this fight in the countryside.

The Mensheviks and S.R.s tried to frighten us by saying that in forming the Poor Peasants' Committees we were splitting the peasants. But if we don't split the peasants? The countryside will be left at the kulak's mercy. And that is exactly what we do not want, so we decided to split them. We said: true, we are losing the kulaks—we cannot avoid that misfortune *(laughter)*—but we shall win thousands and millions of poor peasants who will side with the workers. *(Applause.)*

And that is exactly what is taking place. The split among the peasants only served to bring out more clearly who are the poor peasants, who are the middle peasants not employing the labour of others, and who are the parasites and kulaks.

The workers have been helping the poor peasants in their struggle against the kulaks. In the civil war that has flared up in the countryside the workers are on the side of the poor peasants, as they were when they passed the S.R.-sponsored law on the socialisation of the land.

We Bolsheviks were opposed to this law. Yet we signed it, because we did not want to oppose the will of the majority of peasants. The majority will is binding on us always, and to oppose the majority will is to betray the revolution.

We did not want to impose on the peasants the idea that the equal division of the land was useless, an idea which was alien to them. Far better, we thought, if, by their own experience and suffering, the peasants themselves come to realise that equal division is nonsense. Only then could we ask them how they would escape the ruin and kulak domination that follow from the division of the land.

Division of the land was all very well as a beginning. Its purpose was to show that the land was being taken from the landowners and handed over to the peasants. But

that is not enough. The solution lies only in socialised farming.

You did not realise this at the time, but you are coming round to it by force of experience. The way to escape the disadvantages of small-scale farming lies in communes, artels or peasant associations. That is the way to improve agriculture, economise forces and combat the kulaks, parasites and exploiters.

We were well aware that the peasants live rooted to the soil. The peasants fear innovations and tenaciously cling to old habits. We knew the peasants would only believe in the benefits of any particular measure when their own common sense led them to understand and appreciate the benefits. And that is why we helped to divide the land, although we realised this was no solution.

Now the poor peasants themselves are beginning to agree with us. Experience is teaching them that while ten ploughs, say, are required when the land is divided into one hundred separate holdings, a smaller number suffices under communal farming because the land is not divided up so minutely. A commune permits a whole artel or association to make improvements in agriculture that are beyond the capacity of individual small owners, and so on.

Of course, it will not be possible to change everywhere to socialised farming immediately. The kulaks will put up every resistance–and frequently the peasants themselves stubbornly resist the introduction of communal farming principles. But the more the peasants are convinced by example and by their own experience of the advantages of communes, the greater progress will be.

The Poor Peasants' Committees have an immensely important part to play. They must cover the whole of Russia. For some time their development has been quite rapid. The other day a Congress of Poor Peasants' Committees of the Northern Region was held in Petrograd. Instead of the 7,000 representatives expected, 20,000 actually turned up, and the hall booked for the purpose could not accommodate them all. The fine weather came to the rescue

and the meeting was held in the square outside the Winter Palace.

The Congress showed that the rural civil war is being properly understood: the poor peasants are uniting and fighting together against the kulaks, the rich and the parasites.

Our Party Central Committee has drawn up a plan for reforming the Poor Peasants' Committees which will be submitted for the approval of the Sixth Congress of Soviets. We have decided that the Poor Peasants' Committees and the rural Soviets must not exist separately, otherwise there will be squabbling and too much useless talk. We shall merge the Poor Peasants' Committees with the Soviets and turn the Poor Peasants' Committees into Soviets..

We know kulaks sometimes worm their way even into the Poor Peasants' Committees. If this continues the poor peasants will have the same sort of attitude towards the Committees as they had towards the kulak Soviets of Kerensky and Avksentyev. A change of name will fool nobody. It is therefore proposed to hold new elections to the Poor Peasants' Committees. The right to vote will only go to those who do not exploit the labour of others, who do not make the starving people a source of plunder, and who do not profiteer on or conceal grain surpluses. There must be no place for kulaks and parasites in the proletarian Poor Peasants' Committees.

The Soviet government has decided to assign one thousand million rubles to a special fund for improving farming. All existing and newly formed communes will receive monetary and technical assistance.

We shall send trained experts if they are required. Although most of these experts are counter-revolutionaries, the Poor Peasants' Committees should be able to harness them and they will work for the people no worse than they used to work for the exploiters. Our specialists are now quite sure they cannot overthrow the workers' government by sabotage or wilful damage to work.

We are not afraid of foreign imperialism either. Germany has already burnt her fingers in the Ukraine. Instead of the sixty million poods of grain which Germany hoped to carry off from the Ukraine, she got only nine million poods, and Russian Bolshevism into the bargain, for which she was not so keen. *(Storm of applause.)* The British should watch out the same thing does not happen to them. We might warn them not to choke themselves! *(Laughter and applause.)*

The danger, however, continues to exist as long as our brothers abroad have not everywhere rebelled. And we must therefore continue to organise and strengthen our Red Army. The poor peasants should be particularly concerned in this matter for they can only carry on farming under the protection of our army.

Comrades, the transition to the new form of agriculture may perhaps proceed slowly, but the beginnings of communal farming must be carried into practice unswervingly.

There must be no let-up in the fight against the kulaks, and no deals must be made with them.

We can work together with the middle peasants, and with them fight the kulaks. We have nothing against the middle peasants. They may not be socialists, and may never become socialists, but experience will teach them the advantages of socialised farming and the majority of them will not resist.

We tell the kulaks: We have nothing against you either, but hand over your surplus grain, don't profiteer and don't exploit the labour of others. Until you do so we shall hit you with everything we've got.

We are taking nothing from the working peasants; but we shall completely expropriate all those who employ hired labour and who grow rich at the expense of others. *(Stormy applause.)*

Bednota No. 185,
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SPEECH TO THE FIRST ALL-RUSSIA CONGRESS OF LAND DEPARTMENTS, POOR PEASANTS' COMMITTEES AND COMMUNES

December 11, 1918

(Loud applause passing into ovation. All rise.) Comrades, the composition of this Congress, in my opinion, is in itself an indication of the profound change that has taken place and the great progress we, the Soviet Republic, have made in building socialism, in particular in agricultural relations, which are of the utmost importance to our country. This Congress consists of representatives of the land departments, the Poor Peasants' Committees and the agricultural communes, a combination which shows that within a short space of time, within a single year, our revolution has made great strides in recasting those relations that are the most difficult to recast and which in all previous revolutions constituted the greatest hindrance to the cause of socialism, but which must be most fully recast to ensure the triumph of socialism.

The first stage in the development of our revolution since October was mainly devoted to defeating the common enemy of all the peasants, the landowners.

Comrades, you are all very well aware that even the February Revolution–the revolution of the bourgeoisie, the revolution of the compromisers–promised the peasants victory over the landowners, and that this promise was not fulfilled. Only the October Revolution, only the victory of the urban working class, only the Soviet government could relieve the whole of Russia, from end to end, of the ulcer of the old feudal heritage, the old feudal exploitation,

landed estates and the landowners' oppression of the peasants as a whole, of all peasants without distinction.

This fight against the landowners was one in which all the peasants were bound to participate, and participate they did. The fight united the poor peasants, who do not live by exploiting the labour of others. But it also united the most prosperous and even wealthy peasants, who cannot get along without hired labour.

As long as our revolution was occupied with this task, as long as we had to exert every effort for the independent movement of the peasants, aided by the urban workers' movement, to sweep away and completely destroy the power of the landowners, the revolution remained a general peasant revolution and could therefore not go beyond bourgeois limits.

It had still not touched the more powerful and more modern enemy of all working people–capital. It therefore ran the risk of ending halfway, like the majority of the revolutions in Western Europe, in which a temporary alliance of the urban workers and all the peasants succeeded in sweeping away the monarchy and the survivals of medievalism, in more or less thoroughly sweeping away the landed estates or the power of the landowners, but never succeeded in undermining the actual foundations of the power of capital.

Our revolution began to tackle this much more important and much more difficult task this summer and autumn. The wave of counter-revolutionary uprisings which arose this summer–when the attack of the West-European imperialists and their Czech hirelings on Russia was joined by all the exploiting and oppressing elements in Russian life–injected a new spirit and fresh life in the countryside.

In practice, all these revolts united the European imperialists, their Czech hirelings, and all those in Russia who remained on the side of the landowners and capitalists, united them in a desperate struggle against the Soviet government. These revolts were followed by the revolt of all the village kulaks.

The village was no longer united. The peasants, who had fought as one man against the landowners, now split into two camps–the camp of the more prosperous peasants and the camp of the poor peasants who, side by side with the workers, continued their steadfast advance towards socialism and changed from fighting the landowners to fighting capital, the power of money, and the use of the great land reform for the benefit of the kulaks. This struggle cut the property-owning and exploiting classes off from the revolution completely; it definitely put our revolution on the socialist road which the urban working class had tried so hard and vigorously to put it on in October, but along which it will not be able to direct the revolution successfully unless it finds firm, deliberate and solid support in the countryside.

There lies the significance of the revolution which took place this summer and autumn even in the most remote villages of Russia, a revolution which was not spectacular, not as striking and obvious as the October Revolution of last year, but whose significance is incomparably deeper and greater.

The formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees in the rural districts was the turning-point; it showed that the urban working class, which in October had united with all the peasants to crush the landowners, the principal enemy of the free, socialist Russia of the working people, had progressed from this to the much more difficult and historically more noble and truly socialist task–that of carrying the enlightening socialist struggle into the rural districts, and reaching the minds of the peasants as well. The great agrarian revolution–proclamation in October of the abolition of private ownership of land, proclamation of the socialisation of the land–would have inevitably remained a paper revolution if the urban workers had not stirred into action the rural proletariat, the poor peasants, the working peasants, who constitute the vast majority. Like the middle peasants, they do not exploit the labour of others and are not interested in exploitation. They are therefore capable of advancing, and have already advanced,

beyond the joint struggle against the landowners to the general proletarian struggle against capital, against the rule of the exploiters, who rely on the power of money and property. They have progressed from sweeping Russia clean of landowners to establishing a socialist system.

This, comrades, was an extremely difficult step to take. Those who doubted the socialist character of our revolution prophesied that this is where we were bound to slip up. Today, however, socialist construction in the countryside depends entirely on this step. The formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees, their wide network throughout Russia, their coming conversion, which in part has already begun, into fully competent rural Soviets that will have to put the fundamental principles of Soviet organisation, the power of the working people, into effect in the rural districts, constitute a real guarantee that we have gone further than the tasks to which ordinary bourgeois-democratic revolutions in West-European countries confined themselves. We have destroyed the monarchy and the medieval power of the landowners, and we are now getting down to the real work of building socialism. This is the most difficult but at the same time the most important and very rewarding work in the countryside. We have got through to the working peasants right in the villages; the wave of capitalist revolts has completely turned them against the capitalist class; the peasants in the Poor Peasants' Committees and in the Soviets which are now undergoing changes are more and more joining forces with the urban workers. In all this we see the sole, yet true and undoubtedly permanent guarantee that socialist development in Russia has now become more stable, and has now acquired a basis among the vast mass of the agricultural population.

There is no doubt that building socialism is a very difficult job in a peasant country like Russia. There is no doubt that it was comparatively easy to sweep away an enemy like tsarism, the power of the landowners, the landed estates. At the centre the job could be done in a few days; throughout the country it could be done in a few

weeks. But, by its very nature, the task we are now tackling can be accomplished only by extremely persistent and sustained effort. Here we shall have to fight our way step by step, inch by inch. We shall have to fight for every achievement to win a new, socialist Russia; we shall have to fight for collective farming.

It goes without saying that a revolution of this kind, the transition from small individual peasant farms to collective farming, will take some time and can certainly not be accomplished at one stroke.

We know very well that in countries where small peasant farming prevails the transition to socialism cannot be effected except by a series of gradual, preliminary stages. In the light of this, the first aim set by the October Revolution was merely to overthrow and destroy the landowners' power. The February fundamental law on the socialisation of the land, which, as you know, was passed unanimously both by Communists and the non-Communist partners of the Soviet government, was at the same time an expression of the conscious will of the vast majority of the peasants and proof that the working class, the workers' Communist Party, aware of their task, are persistently and patiently advancing towards the new socialist construction–advancing by a series of gradual measures, by awakening the working peasants, and forging ahead only in step with that awakening, only insofar as the peasants are independently organised.

We fully realise that such tremendous changes in the lives of tens of millions of people as the transition from small individual peasant farming to collective farming, affecting as they do the most deep-going roots of the peasants' way of life and their mores, can only be accomplished by long effort, and only when necessity compels people to reshape their lives.

After the long and desperate world war, we can clearly discern the beginnings of a socialist revolution all over the world. This has become a necessity for even the more backward countries and–irrespective of any theoretical views or socialist doctrines–is emphatically bringing it

home to everybody that it is impossible to live in the old way.

The country has suffered tremendous ruin and disruption, and we see this disruption spreading all over the world, we see many centuries of man's cultural, scientific and technological achievements swept away in these four years of criminal, destructive and predatory war, and the whole of Europe, not merely Russia alone, returning to a state of barbarism. Now, all common people, particularly the peasants, who have probably suffered most from the war, are coming to realise clearly enough that tremendous efforts are required, that every ounce of energy must be exerted to get rid of the legacy of this accursed war which has left us nothing but ruin and want. It is impossible to live in the old way, in the way we lived before the war, and the waste of human toil and effort associated with individual small-scale peasant farming cannot continue. The productivity of labour would be doubled or trebled, there would be a double or triple saving of human labour in agriculture and human activity in general if a transition were made from this scattered small-scale farming to collective farming.

The ruination left by the war simply does not allow us to restore the old small-scale peasant farms. Not only have the mass of the peasants been awakened by the war, not only has the war shown them what technical marvels now exist and how these marvels have been adapted for people's extermination, but it has also given rise to the idea that these technical marvels must be used primarily to reshape agriculture, the most common form of production in the country, in which the greatest number of people are engaged, but which at the same time is the most backward. Not only has this idea been provoked, but the monstrous horrors of modern warfare have made people realise what forces modern technology has created, how these forces are wasted in awful and senseless war, and that it is the forces of technology themselves that are the only means of salvation from such horrors. It is our obligation and duty to use these forces to give new life to the most backward

form of production, agriculture, to reshape it, and to transform it from production conducted in the old, unenlightened way, into production based on science and technical achievements. The war has made people realise this much more than any of us can imagine. But besides this the war has also made it impossible to restore production in the old way.

Those who cherish the hope that after this war the pre-war situation can be restored, that the old system and farming methods can be resumed, are mistaken and are coming to realise their mistake more and more every day. The war has resulted in such terrible ruin that some small farms now possess no draught animals or implements. We cannot allow the waste of people's labour to continue. The poor peasants, who have borne the greatest sacrifices for the revolution and suffered most from the war, did not take the land from the landowners for it to fall into the hands of new kulaks. The latest developments are now confronting these peasants with the question of turning to collective farming as the only means of restoring the agriculture that has been ruined and destroyed by the war. This is the only means of escaping from ignorance and oppression to which capitalism doomed the entire rural population, due to which the capitalists were able for four years to burden mankind with war and from which the working people of all countries are now striving with revolutionary energy and fervour to rid themselves at all costs.

These, comrades, are the conditions that were required on a world scale for this most difficult and at the same time most important socialist reform, this crucial and fundamental socialist measure, to come to the forefront, and it has come to the forefront in Russia. The formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees and this joint Congress of land departments, Poor Peasants' Committees and agricultural communes, taken in conjunction with the struggle which took place in the countryside this summer and autumn, go to show that very many peasants have been awakened, and that the peasants themselves, the majority

of the working peasants, are striving toward collective farming. Of course, I repeat, we must tackle this great reform gradually. Here, nothing can be done at one stroke. But I must remind you that the fundamental law on the socialisation of the land, whose adoption was a foregone conclusion on the first day after the Revolution of October 25, at the very first session of the first organ of Soviet power, the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, did more than abolish private ownership of land for ever and do away with landed estates. It also stipulated, among other things, that farm property, draught animals and farm implements which passed into the possession of the nation and the working peasants should become public property and cease to be the private property of individual farms. And on the fundamental question of our present aims, of what tasks of land disposal we want carried out, and what we want from the supporters of the Soviet government, the working peasants, in this respect, Article 11 of the law on the socialisation of the land, which was adopted in February 1918, states that the aim is to develop collective farming, the most advantageous form of farming from the point of view of economy of labour and products. This will be at the expense of individual farming and with the aim of passing over to socialist farming.

Comrades, when we passed this law, complete agreement did not exist between the Communists and the other parties. On the contrary, we passed this law when the Soviet Government united the Communists and the Left S.R. Party members, who did not hold communist views. Nevertheless, we arrived at a unanimous decision, to which we adhere to this day, remembering, I repeat, that the transition from individual farming to collective farming cannot be effected at one stroke, and that the struggle which developed in the towns was resolved more easily. In the towns thousands of workers had one capitalist to deal with, and it did not take much trouble to remove him, The struggle which developed in the rural districts, however, was much more complex. At first there was the general drive of the peasants against the landowners; at first the power of the

landowners was utterly destroyed so that it could never be restored again. This was followed by a struggle among the peasants themselves, among whom new capitalists arose in the shape of the kulaks, the exploiters and profiteers who used their surplus grain to enrich themselves at the expense of the starving non-agricultural parts of Russia. Here a new struggle began, and you know that this summer it led to a number of revolts. We do not say of the kulak as we do of the capitalist landowner that he must be deprived of all his property. What we do say is that we must break the kulak's resistance to indispensable measures, such as the grain monopoly, which he is violating to enrich himself by selling his grain surplus at exorbitant prices, while the workers and peasants in the non-agricultural areas are suffering pangs of hunger. Our policy here has been to wage a struggle as merciless as that waged against the landowners and capitalists. But there also remained the question of the attitude of the poor peasants to the middle peasants. Our policy has always been to form an alliance with the middle peasant. He is no enemy of Soviet institutions. He is no enemy of the proletariat or socialism. He will, of course, hesitate and only consent to socialism when he sees by definite and convincing example that it is necessary. The middle peasant, of course, cannot be convinced by theoretical arguments or by agitation. And we do not count on that. But he can be convinced by the example and the solid front of the poor peasants. He can be convinced by an alliance of the poor peasants with the proletariat. And here we are counting on a prolonged and gradual process of persuasion and on a number of transitional measures which will bring about agreement between the proletarian, socialist section of the population, agreement between the Communists who are conducting a resolute fight against capital in all its forms, and the middle peasants.

Appreciating this state of affairs and that our task in the rural areas is incomparably more difficult, we present the question in the way it was presented in the law on the socialisation of the land. You know that the law pro-

claimed abolition of private ownership of land and equal land tenure, and you know that the enforcement of this law was begun in that spirit, and that it has been put into effect in the majority of rural areas. The law, moreover, contains, with the unanimous consent both of Communists and of people who at that time did not yet share communist views, the thesis I have just read to you, which declares that our common task and our common aim is the transition to socialist farming, to collective land tenure and collective farming. As we proceed with our construction, both the peasants who have already settled on the land and the prisoners of war who are now returning from captivity in thousands and millions, ragged and exhausted, are coming to realise more and more clearly the vast scope of the work that must be done to restore agriculture and free the peasant for ever from his old, neglected, downtrodden and ignorant state. It is becoming clearer to them that the only sure way of escape, one that will bring the mass of peasants nearer to a civilised life and put them on a par with other citizens, is collective farming, which the Soviet government is now systematically striving to put into effect by gradual measures. It is for this purpose, for collective farming, that the communes and state farms are being formed. The importance of this type of farming is indicated in the law on the socialisation of the land. In the clause stating who is entitled to the use of the land, you will find that among the persons and institutions so entitled first place is given to the state, second to public organisations, third to agricultural communes, and fourth to agricultural cooperative societies. I again draw your attention to the fact that these fundamental principles of the law on the socialisation of the land were laid down when the Communist Party was carrying out not only its own will, but when it made deliberate concessions to those who in one way or another expressed the ideas and will of the middle peasants. We made such concessions, and are still making them. We concluded and are concluding agreements of this kind because the transition to the collective form of landownership, to collective farming, to state

farms, to communes, cannot be effected at one stroke. It requires the determined and persistent action of the Soviet government, which has assigned one thousand million rubles for the improvement of agriculture on condition that collective farming is adopted. This law shows that we want to influence the mass of middle peasants mainly by force of example, by inviting them to improve farming, and that we count only on the gradual effect of such measures to bring about this profound and crucial revolution in agricultural production in Russia.

The alliance of the Poor Peasants' Committees, agricultural communes and land departments at the present Congress shows us, and gives us full assurance, that by this transition to collective farming we have got things going correctly, on a truly socialist scale. This steady and systematic work must ensure an increase in the productivity of labour. For this purpose we must adopt the best farming methods and enlist the farm specialists of Russia so that we may be able to put the best organised farms at our service, which hitherto served as a source of enrichment for individuals, as the source of capitalist revival, as the source of a new bondage and a new enslavement of wage-labourers, but which now, under the socialisation of land law and the complete abolition of private ownership of land, must serve as a source of agricultural knowledge and culture and of higher productivity for the millions of working people. This alliance between the urban workers and the working peasants, the formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees and their merger with the Soviets are a guarantee that agricultural Russia has taken a path which is being taken by one West-European state after another, later than us, but with greater certainty. It was much harder for them to start the revolution because their enemy was not a rotten autocracy, but a highly cultured and united capitalist class. But, as you know, this revolution has begun. You know that the revolution has not been confined to Russia, and that our chief hope, our chief support, is the proletariat of the more advanced countries of Western Europe, and that this chief support of the world

revolution has begun to move. And we are firmly convinced, and the course of the German revolution has shown it in practice, that the transition to socialist farming there, the use of more advanced agricultural techniques and the union of the agricultural population will proceed more rapidly and easily than in our country.

In alliance with the urban workers and the socialist proletariat of the whole world, the working peasants of Russia can now be certain they will overcome all their adversities, beat off all the attacks of the imperialists, and accomplish that without which the emancipation of the working people is impossible–collective farming, the gradual but steady transition from small individual farms to collective farming. *(Loud, prolonged applause.)*

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REPORT ON WORK IN THE COUNTRYSIDE DELIVERED AT THE EIGHTH CONGRESS OF THE R C P (B March 23 1919

(Pro onged applause) Comrades I must apo og se for nav ng been unab e to attend all the meet ngs of the comm t ee e ected by the Congress to cons der the quest on of work n the countrys de My report w l therefore be supp emented by the speeches of comrades who have taken part n the work of the comm ttee from the very beg nn ng The comm tee fina y drew up theses wh ch were turned over to a comm ss on and which w be reported on to you [30] I shou d ke to dwe on the general s gn ficance of the quest on as t confronts us fol ow ng the work of the comm tee and as n my op n on t now confronts the who e Party

Comrades t s qui e natura that as the pro etarian revo ut on deve ops we have to put n the forefront first one then another of the most comp ex and important prob ems of soc a life It s perfectly natura that n a revo u t on wh ch affects and s bound to affect the deepest founda ons of life and the broadest mass of the popu at on not a s ng e party not a s ng e government no matter how c ose t may be to the peop e can poss b y embrace al aspects of fe *at once* And if we now have to dea w th the quest on of work n the countrys de and n connection w th th s quest on to give prominence to the pos tion of the m ddle peasants there s noth ng strange or abnormal n this from the standpo nt of the deve opment of the pro etarian revo ution in general It s natural that the pro-

letarian revolution had to begin with the fundamental relation between two hostile classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The principal task was to transfer power to the working class, to secure its dictatorship, to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to deprive them of the economic sources of their power which would undoubtedly be a hindrance to all socialist construction in general. Since we are acquainted with Marxism, none of us have ever for a moment doubted the truth of the thesis that the very economic structure of capitalist society is such that the deciding factor in that society must be either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. We now see many former Marxists–from the Menshevik camp, for example–who assert that in a period of decisive struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie *democracy in general* can prevail. This is what is said by the Mensheviks, who have come to a complete agreement with the Socialist-Revolutionaries. As though it were not the bourgeoisie themselves who create or abolish democracy as they find most convenient for themselves! And since that is so, there can be no question of democracy in general at a time of acute struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is astonishing how rapidly these Marxists or pseudo-Marxists–our Mensheviks, for example–expose themselves, and how rapidly their true nature, the nature of petty-bourgeois democrats, comes to the surface.

All his life Marx fought most of all the illusions of petty-bourgeois democracy and bourgeois democracy. Marx scoffed most of all at empty talk of freedom and equality, when it serves as a screen for the freedom of the workers to starve to death, or the equality between the one who sells his labour-power and the bourgeois who allegedly freely purchases that labour in the open market as if from an equal, and so forth. Marx explains this in all his economic works. It may be said that the whole of Marx's *Capital* is devoted to explaining the truth that *the basic forces of capitalist society are, and must be, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat*–bourgeoisie, as the builder of this capitalist society, as its leader, as its motive force, and the

proletariat, as its grave-digger and as the only force capable of replacing it. You can hardly find a single chapter in any of Marx's works that is not devoted to this. You might say that all over the world the socialists of the Second International have vowed and sworn to the workers time and again that they understand this truth. But when matters reached the stage of the real and, moreover, decisive struggle for power between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie we find that our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, as well as the leaders of the old socialist parties all over the world, forgot this truth and began to repeat in purely parrot fashion the philistine phrases about democracy in general.

Attempts are sometimes made to lend these words what is considered to be greater force by speaking of the "dictatorship of democracy". That is sheer nonsense. We know perfectly well from history that the dictatorship of the democratic bourgeoisie meant nothing but the suppression of the insurgent workers. That has been the case ever since 1848–at any rate, beginning not later, and isolated examples may be found even earlier. History shows that it is precisely in a bourgeois democracy that a most acute struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie develops extensively and freely. We have had occasion to convince ourselves of this truth in practice. And the measures taken by the Soviet Government since October 1917 have been distinguished by their firmness on all fundamental questions precisely because we have never departed from this truth and have never forgotten it. The issue of the struggle for supremacy waged against the bourgeoisie can be settled only by the dictatorship of one class–the proletariat. Only the dictatorship of the proletariat can defeat the bourgeoisie. Only the proletariat can overthrow the bourgeoisie. And only the proletariat can secure the following of the people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

However, it by no means follows from this–and it would be a profound mistake to think it does–that in further building communism, when the bourgeoisie have been

overthrown and political power is already in the hands of the proletariat, we can continue to carry on without the participation of the middle, intermediary elements.

It is natural that at the beginning of the revolution–the proletarian revolution–the whole attention of its active participants should be concentrated on the main and fundamental issue, the supremacy of the proletariat and the securing of that supremacy by a victory over the bourgeoisie–making it certain that the bourgeoisie cannot regain power. We are well aware that the bourgeoisie still enjoy the advantages derived from the wealth they possess in other countries or the monetary wealth they possess, sometimes even in our own country. We are well aware that there are social elements who are more experienced than proletarians and who aid the bourgeoisie. We are well aware that the bourgeoisie have not abandoned the idea of returning to power and have not ceased attempting to restore their supremacy.

But that is by no means all. The bourgeoisie, who put forward most insistently the principle "my country is wherever it is good for me", and who, as far as money is concerned, have always been international–*the bourgeoisie internationally are still stronger than we are.* Their supremacy is being rapidly undermined, they are being confronted with such facts as the Hungarian revolution[31]–about which we were happy to inform you yesterday and are today receiving confirming reports–and they are beginning to understand that their supremacy is shaky. They no longer enjoy freedom of action. But now, if you take into account the material means on the world scale, we cannot help admitting that in the material respect the bourgeoisie are at present still stronger than we are.

That is why nine-tenths of our attention and our practical activities were devoted, and had to be devoted, to this fundamental question–the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of the power of the proletariat and the elimination of every possibility of the return of the bourgeoisie to power. That is perfectly natural, legitimate, and

unavoidable, and in this field very much has been accomplished.

Now, however, we must decide the question of other sections of the population. We must–and this was our unanimous conclusion in the agrarian committee, and on this, we are convinced, all Party workers will agree, because we merely summed up the results of their observations–we must now decide *the question of the middle peasants* in its totality.

Of course, there are people who, instead of studying the course taken by our revolution, instead of giving thought to the tasks now confronting us, instead of all this, make every step of the Soviet government a butt for the derision and criticism of the type we hear from those gentlemen, the Mensheviks and the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. These people have still not understood that they must make a choice between us and the bourgeois dictatorship. We have displayed great patience, even indulgence, towards these people. We shall allow them to enjoy our indulgence once more. But in the very near future we shall set a limit to our patience and indulgence, and if they do not make their choice, we shall tell them in all seriousness to go to Kolchak.[32] *(Applause.)* We do not expect particularly brilliant intellectual ability from such people. *(Laughter.)* But it might have been expected that after experiencing the bestialities of Kolchak they ought to understand that we are entitled to demand that they should choose between us and Kolchak. If during the first few months that followed the October Revolution there were many naïve people who were stupid enough to believe that the dictatorship of the proletariat was something transient and fortuitous, today even the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries ought to understand that there is something logically necessary in the struggle that is being waged because of the onslaught of the whole international bourgeoisie.

Actually only two forces have been created–the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Whoever has not learned this from Marx, whoever has not learned this from the works of all the

great socialists, has never been a socialist, has never understood anything about socialism, and has only called himself a socialist. We are allowing these people a brief period for reflection and demand that they make their decision. I have mentioned them because they are now saying or will say: "The Bolsheviks have raised the question of the middle peasants; they want to make advances to them." I am very well aware that considerable space is given in the Menshevik press to arguments of this kind, and even far worse. We ignore such arguments, we never attach importance to the jabber of our adversaries. People who are still capable of running to and fro between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat may say what they please. We are following our own road.

Our road is determined above all by considerations of class forces. A struggle is developing in capitalist society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. As long as that struggle has not ended we shall give our keenest attention to fighting it out to the end. It has not yet been brought to the end, although in that struggle much has already been accomplished. The hands of the international bourgeoisie are no longer free; the best proof of this is that the Hungarian proletarian revolution has taken place. It is therefore clear that our rural organisational work has already gone beyond the limits to which it was confined when everything was subordinated to the fundamental demand of the struggle for power.

This development passed through two main phases. In October 1917 we seized power *together with the peasants as a whole.* This was a bourgeois revolution, inasmuch as the class struggle in the rural districts had not yet developed. As I have said, the real proletarian revolution in the rural districts began only in the summer of 1918. Had we not succeeded in stirring up this revolution our work would have been incomplete. The first stage was the seizure of power in the cities and the establishment of the Soviet form of government. The second stage was one which is fundamental for all socialists and without which socialists are not socialists, namely, to single out the

proletarian and semi-proletarian elements in the rural districts and to ally them to the urban proletariat in order to wage the struggle against the bourgeoisie in the countryside. This stage is also in the main completed. The organisations we originally created for this purpose, the Poor Peasants' Committees, had become so consolidated that we found it possible to replace them by properly elected Soviets, i.e., to reorganise the village Soviets so as to make them the organs of class rule, the organs of proletarian power in the rural districts. Such measures as the law on socialist land settlement and the measures for the transition to socialist farming, which was passed not very long ago by the Central Executive Committee and with which everybody is, of course, familiar, sum up our experience from the point of view of our proletarian revolution.

The main thing, the prime and basic task of the proletarian revolution, we have already accomplished. And precisely because we have accomplished it, a more complicated problem has come to the fore—*our attitude towards the middle peasants.* And whoever thinks that the prominence being given this problem is in any way symptomatic of a weakening of the character of our government, of a weakening of the dictatorship of the proletariat, that it is symptomatic of a change, however partial, however minute, in our basic policy, completely fails to understand the aims of the proletariat and the aims of the communist revolution. I am convinced that there are no such people in our Party. I only wanted to warn the comrades against people not belonging to the workers' party who will talk in this way, not because it follows from any system of ideas, but because they merely want to spoil things for us and to help the whiteguards—or, to put it more simply, to incite against us the middle peasant, who is always vacillating, who cannot help vacillating, and who will continue to vacillate for a fairly long time to come. In order to incite the middle peasant against us they will say, "See, they are making advances to you! That means they have taken your revolts into account, they are begin-

ning to wobble", and so on and so forth. All our comrades must be armed against agitation of this kind. And I am certain that they will be armed–provided we succeed now in having this question treated from the standpoint of the class struggle.

It is perfectly obvious that this fundamental problem–*how precisely to define the attitude of the proletariat towards the middle peasants*–is a more complex but no less urgent problem. Comrades, from the theoretical point of view, which has been mastered by the vast majority of the workers, this question presents no difficulty to Marxists. I will remind you, for instance, that in his book on the agrarian question, written at a time when he was still correctly expounding the teachings of Marx and was regarded as an indisputed authority in this field, Kautsky states in connection with the transition from capitalism to socialism that the task of a socialist party *is to neutralise the peasants*, i.e., to see to it that in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie the peasant should remain neutral and should not be able to give active assistance to the bourgeoisie against us.

Throughout the extremely long period of the rule of the bourgeoisie, the peasants sided with the bourgeoisie and supported their power. This will be understood if you consider the economic strength of the bourgeoisie and the political instruments of their rule. We cannot count on the middle peasant coming over to our side immediately. But if we pursue a correct policy, after a time these vacillations will cease and the peasant will be able to come over to our side.

It was Engels–who together with Marx laid the foundations of scientific Marxism, that is, the teachings by which our Party has always guided itself, and particularly in time of revolution–it was Engels who established the division of the peasants into small peasants, middle peasants, and big peasants, and this division holds good for most European countries even today. Engels said, "Perhaps it will not everywhere be necessary to suppress even the big peasant by force." And that we might ever use force

in respect of the middle peasant (the small peasant is our friend) is a thought that has never occurred to any sensible socialist. That is what Engels said in 1894, a year before his death, when the agrarian question came to the fore.[33] This point of view expresses a truth which is sometimes forgotten, but with which we are all in theory agreed. In relation to the landowners and the capitalists our aim is complete expropriation. *But we shall not tolerate any use of force in respect of the middle peasants.* Even in respect of the rich peasants we do not say as resolutely as we do of the bourgeoisie–absolute expropriation of the rich peasants and the kulaks. This distinction is made in our programme. We say that the resistance of the counter-revolutionary efforts of the rich peasants must be suppressed. That is not complete expropriation.

The basic difference in our attitude towards the bourgeoisie and the middle peasant–complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie and an alliance with the middle peasant who does not exploit others–this basic line is accepted by everybody in theory. But this line is not consistently followed in practice; the people in the localities have not yet learned to follow it. When, after having overthrown the bourgeoisie and consolidated its own power, the proletariat started from various angles to create a new society, the question of the middle peasant came to the fore. Not a single socialist in the world denied that the building of communism would take different courses in countries where large-scale farming prevails and in countries where small-scale farming prevails. That is an elementary truth, an ABC. And from this truth it follows that as we approach the problems of communist construction our principal attention must to a certain extent be concentrated precisely on the middle peasant.

Much will depend on how we define our attitude towards the middle peasant. Theoretically, that question has been solved; but we know perfectly well from our own experience that there is a difference between solving a problem theoretically and putting the solution into practice. We are now directly confronted with that difference, which was so

characteristic of the great French Revolution, when the French Convention launched into sweeping measures but did not possess the necessary support to put them into effect, and did not even know on what class to rely for the implementation of any particular measure.

Our position is an infinitely more fortunate one. Thanks to a whole century of development, we know on which class we are relying. But we also know that the practical experience of that class is extremely inadequate. The fundamental aim was clear to the working class and the workers' party–to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and to transfer power to the workers. But *how* was that to be done? Everyone remembers with what difficulty and at the cost of how many mistakes we passed from workers' control to workers' management of industry. And yet that was work within our own class, among the proletarians, with whom we had always had to deal. But now we are called upon to define our attitude towards a new class, a class the urban worker does not know. We have to determine our attitude towards a class which has no definite and stable position. The proletariat in the mass is in favour of socialism, the bourgeoisie in the mass are opposed to socialism. It is easy to determine the relations between these two classes. But when we come up against people like the middle peasants we find that *they are a class that vacillates.* The middle peasant is partly a property-owner and partly a working man. He does not exploit other working people. For decades the middle peasant defended his position with the greatest difficulty, he suffered the exploitation of the landowners and the capitalists, he bore everything. Yet he is a property-owner. Our attitude towards this vacillating class therefore presents enormous difficulties. In the light of more than a year's experience, in the light of more than six months' proletarian work in the rural districts, and in the light of the class differentiation in the rural districts that has already taken place, we must most of all beware here lest we are too hasty, lest we are inadequately theoretical, lest we regard what is in process of being accomplished, but has not yet been realised,

as having been accomplished. In the resolution which is being proposed to you by the commission elected by the committee, and which will be read to you by a subsequent speaker, you will find sufficient warning against this.

From the economic point of view, it is obvious that we must help the middle peasant. Theoretically, there is no doubt of this. But because of our habits, our level of culture, the inadequacy of the cultural and technical forces we are in a position to place at the disposal of the rural districts, and because of the helpless manner in which we often approach the rural districts, comrades frequently resort to coercion and thus spoil everything. Only yesterday a comrade gave me a pamphlet entitled *Instructions and Regulations on Party Work in Nizhni-Novgorod Gubernia*, issued by the Nizhni-Novgorod Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and in this pamphlet, for example, I find this on p. 41: "The whole burden of the emergency tax decree must be placed on the shoulders of the village kulaks and profiteers and *the middle element of the peasants generally*." Well, well! These people have indeed "understood". This is either a printer's error—and it is impermissible that such printer's errors should be made—or a piece of rushed, hasty work, which shows how dangerous all haste is in this matter. Or—and this is the worst surmise of all, one I would not like to make with regard to the Nizhni-Novgorod comrades—they have simply failed to understand. It may very well be that it is an oversight.

We have, in practice, cases like the one related by a comrade in the commission. He was surrounded by peasants, and every one of them asked: "Tell me, am I a middle peasant or not? I have two horses and one cow. I have two cows and one horse," etc. And this agitator, who tours the uyezds, is expected to possess an infallible thermometer with which to gauge every peasant and say whether he is a middle peasant or not. To do that you must know the whole history of the given peasant's farm, his relation to higher and lower groups—and we cannot know that accurately.

Considerable practical ability and knowledge of local conditions are required here, and we do not yet possess them. You need not be ashamed to confess it; it must be admitted frankly. We were never utopians and never imagined that we would build communist society with the immaculate hands of immaculate Communists, born and educated in an immaculately communist society. That is a fairy-tale. We have to build communism out of the debris of capitalism, and only the class which has been steeled in the struggle against capitalism can do that. The proletariat, as you are very well aware, is not free from the shortcomings and weaknesses of capitalist society. It is fighting for socialism, but at the same time it is fighting against its own shortcomings. The best and foremost section of the proletariat, which carried on a desperate struggle in the cities for decades, was in a position to acquire in the course of that struggle the culture of life in the capital and other cities, and to a certain extent did acquire it. You know that even in advanced countries the rural districts were condemned to ignorance. Of course, we shall raise the level of culture in the rural districts, but that will be the work of many, many years, that is what our comrades everywhere are forgetting and what is being strikingly brought home to us by every word uttered by people who come from the rural districts; not by the intellectuals who work here, not by the officials–we have listened to them a lot–but by people who have in practice observed the work in the rural districts. It was these opinions that we found particularly valuable in the agrarian committee. These opinions will be particularly valuable now–I am convinced of that–for the whole Party Congress, for they come not from books, and not from decrees, but from experience.

All this obliges us to work for the purpose of introducing the greatest possible clarity into our attitude towards the middle peasant. This is very difficult, because *such clarity does not exist in reality.* Not only is this problem unsolved, it is *insoluble,* if you want to solve it *immediately and all at once.* There are people who say that there

was no need to write so many decrees. They blame the Soviet Government for setting about writing decrees without knowing how they were to be put into effect. These people, as a matter of fact, do not realise that they are sinking to the whiteguard position. If we had expected that life in the rural districts could be completely changed by writing a hundred decrees, we would have been absolute idiots. But if we had refrained from indicating in decrees the road that must be followed, we would have been traitors to socialism. These decrees, while in practice they could not be carried into effect fully and immediately, played an important part as propaganda. While formerly we carried on our propaganda by means of general truths, *we are now carrying on our propaganda by our work.* That is also preaching, but it is preaching by action—only not action in the sense of the isolated sallies of some upstarts, at which we scoffed so much in the era of the anarchists and the socialism of the old type. Our decree is a call, but not the old call "Workers, arise and overthrow the bourgeoisie!" No, it is a call to the people, it calls them to practical work. *Decrees are instructions which call for practical work on a mass scale.* That is what is important. Let us assume that decrees do contain much that is useless, much that in practice cannot be put into effect; but they contain material for practical action, and the purpose of a decree is to teach practical steps to the hundreds, thousands, and millions of people who heed the voice of the Soviet government. This is a trial in practical action in the sphere of socialist construction in the rural districts. If we treat matters in this way we shall acquire a good deal from the sum total of our laws, decrees, and ordinances. We shall not regard them as absolute injunctions which must be put into effect instantly and at all costs.

We must avoid everything that in practice may tend to encourage individual abuses. In places careerists and adventurers have attached themselves to us like leeches, people who call themselves Communists and are deceiving us, and who have wormed their way into our ranks because the Communists are now in power, and because the more

honest government employees refused to come and work with us on account of their retrograde ideas, while careerists have no ideas, and no honesty. These people, whose only aim is to make a career, resort in the localities to coercion, and imagine they are doing a good thing. But in fact the result of this at times is that the peasants say, "Long live Soviet power, but *down with the communia*!" (i.e., communism). This is not an invention; these facts are taken from real life, from the reports of comrades in the localities. We must not forget what enormous damage is always caused by lack of moderation, by all rashness, and haste.

We had to hurry and, by taking a desperate leap, to get out of the imperialist war at any cost, for it had brought us to the verge of collapse. We had to make most desperate efforts to crush the bourgeoisie and the forces that were threatening to crush us. All this was necessary, without this we could not have triumphed. But if we were to act in the same way towards the middle peasant it would be such idiocy, such stupidity, it would be so ruinous to our cause, that only provocateurs could deliberately act in such a way. The aim here must be an entirely different one. Here our aim is not to smash the resistance of obvious exploiters, to defeat and overthrow them–which was the aim we previously set ourselves. No, now that this main purpose has been accomplished, more complicated problems arise. You cannot create anything here by coercion. *Coercion applied to the middle peasants would cause untold harm.* This section is a numerous one, it consists of millions of individuals. Even in Europe, where it nowhere reaches such numbers, where technology and culture, urban life and railways are tremendously developed, and where it would be easiest of all to think of such a thing, nobody, not even the most revolutionary of socialists, has ever proposed adopting measures of coercion towards the middle peasant.

When we were taking power we relied on the support of the peasants as a whole. At that time the aim of all the peasants was the same–to fight the landowners. But their

prejudice against large-scale farming has remained to this day. The peasant thinks that if there is a big farm, that means he will again be a farm-hand. That, of course, is a mistake. But the peasant's idea of large-scale farming is associated with a feeling of hatred and the memory of how landowners used to oppress the people. That feeling still remains, it has not yet died.

We must particularly stress the truth that here by the very nature of the case coercive methods can accomplish nothing. The economic task here is an entirely different one; there is no upper layer that can be cut off, leaving the foundation and the building intact. That upper layer which in the cities was represented by the capitalists does not exist in the village. *Here coercion would ruin the whole cause.* Prolonged educational work is required. We have to give the peasant, who not only in our country but all over the world is a practical man and a realist, concrete examples to prove that the "communia" is the best possible thing. Of course, nothing will come of it if hasty individuals flit down to a village from a city to chatter and stir up a number of intellectual-like and at times unintellectual-like squabbles, and then quarrel with everyone and go their way. That sometimes happens. Instead of evoking respect, they evoke ridicule, and deservedly so.

On this question we must say that we do encourage communes, but they must be so organised *as to gain the confidence of the peasants.* And until then we are pupils of the peasants and not their teachers. Nothing is more stupid than people who know nothing about farming and its specific features, rushing to the village only because they have heard of the advantages of socialised farming, are tired of urban life and desire to work in rural districts—it is most stupid for such people to regard themselves as teachers of the peasants in every respect. *Nothing is more stupid than the very idea of applying coercion in economic relations with the middle peasant.*

The aim is not to expropriate the middle peasant but to bear in mind the specific conditions in which the peasant lives, to learn from him methods of transition to a better

system, *and not to dare to give orders*! That is the rule we have set ourselves. *(General applause.)* That is the rule we have endeavoured to set forth in our draft resolution, for in that respect, comrades, we have indeed sinned a great deal. We are by no means ashamed to confess it. We were inexperienced. Our very struggle against the exploiters was taken from experience. If we have sometimes been condemned on account of it, we can say, "Dear capitalist gentlemen, you have only yourselves to blame. If you had not offered such savage, senseless, insolent, and desperate resistance, if you had not joined in an alliance with the world bourgeoisie, the revolution would have assumed more peaceful forms." Now that we have repulsed the savage onslaught on all sides we can change to other methods, because we are acting not as a narrow circle, but as a party which is leading the millions. The millions cannot immediately understand a change of course, and so it frequently happens that blows aimed at the kulaks fall on the middle peasants. That is not surprising. It must only be understood that this is due to historical conditions which have now been outlived and that the new conditions and the new tasks in relation to this class demand a new psychology.

Our decrees on peasant farming are in the main correct. We have no grounds for renouncing a single one of them, or for regretting a single one of them. But if the decrees are right, *it is wrong to impose them on the peasants by force.* That is not contained in a single decree. They are right inasmuch as they indicate the roads to follow, inasmuch as they call to practical measures. When we say, "Encourage associations", we are giving instructions which must be tested many times before the final *form* in which to put them into effect is found. When it is stated that we must strive to gain the peasants' voluntary consent, it means that they must be persuaded, and persuaded by practical deeds. They will not allow themselves to be convinced by mere words, and they are perfectly right in that. It would be a bad thing if they allowed themselves to be convinced merely by reading decrees and agitational leaflets. If it were possible to reshape economic life in this way, such

reshaping would not be worth a brass farthing. It must first be proved that such association is better, people must be united in such a way that they become actually united and are not at odds with each other–it must be proved that association is advantageous. That is the way the peasant puts the question and that is the way our decrees put it. If we have not been able to achieve that so far, there is nothing to be ashamed of and we must admit it frankly.

We have so far accomplished only the fundamental task of every socialist revolution–that of defeating the bourgeoisie. That in the main has been accomplished, although an extremely difficult half-year is beginning in which the imperialists of the world are making a last attempt to crush us. We can now say without in the least exaggerating that *they themselves understand that after this half-year their cause will be absolutely hopeless.* Either they take advantage now of our state of exhaustion and defeat us, an isolated country, or we emerge victorious not merely in regard to our country alone. In this half-year, in which the food crisis has been aggravated by a transport crisis, and in which the imperialist powers are endeavouring to attack us on several fronts, our situation is extremely difficult. But *this is the last difficult half-year.* We must continue to mobilise all our forces in the struggle against the external enemy who is attacking us.

But when we speak of the aims of our work in the rural districts, in spite of all the difficulties, and in spite of the fact that our experience has been wholly concerned with the immediate task of crushing the exploiters, we must remember, and never forget, that our aims in the rural districts, in relation to the middle peasant, are entirely different.

All the class-conscious workers–from Petrograd, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, or Moscow–who have been to the rural districts related examples of how a number of misunderstandings which appeared to be irremovable, and a number of conflicts which appeared to be very serious, were removed or mitigated when intelligent working men came forward and spoke, not in the bookish language, but in a

language understood by the peasants, when they spoke not as commanders who take the liberty of giving orders without knowing anything of rural life, but as comrades, explaining the situation and appealing to their sentiments as working people against the exploiters. And by such comradely explanation they accomplished what could not be accomplished by hundreds of others who conducted themselves like commanders and superiors.

That is the spirit that permeates the resolution we are now submitting to you.

I have endeavoured in my brief report to dwell on the underlying principles, on the general political significance of this resolution. I have endeavoured to show–and I should like to think that I have succeeded–that from the point of view of the interests of the revolution as a whole we are making no change of policy, we are not changing the line. The whiteguards and their henchmen are shouting, or will shout, that we are. Let them shout. We do not care. We are pursuing our aims in a most consistent manner. We must transfer our attention from the aim of suppressing the bourgeoisie to the aim of arranging the life of the middle peasant. We must live in peace with him. In a communist society the middle peasants will be on our side only when we alleviate and improve their economic conditions. If tomorrow we could supply one hundred thousand first-class tractors, provide them with fuel, provide them with drivers–you know very well that this at present is sheer fantasy–the middle peasant would say, "I am for the communia" (i.e., for communism). But in order to do that we must first defeat the international bourgeoisie, we must compel them to give us these tractors, or so develop our productive forces as to be able to provide them ourselves. That is the only correct way to pose this question.

The peasant needs the industry of the towns; he cannot live without it, and it is in our hands. If we set about the task properly, the peasant will be grateful to us for bringing him these products, these implements and this culture from the towns. They will be brought to him not by exploiters, not by landowners, but by his fellow-workers,

whom he values very highly, but values in a practical manner, for the actual help they give, at the same time rejecting–and quite rightly rejecting–all domineering and "orders" from above.

First help, and then endeavour to win confidence. If you set about this task correctly, if every step taken by every one of our groups in the uyezds, the volosts, the food procurement groups, and in every other organisation is made properly, if every step of ours is carefully checked from this point of view, we shall gain the confidence of the peasant, and only then shall we be able to proceed farther. What we must now do is to help him and advise him. This will not be the orders of a commander, but the advice of a comrade. The peasant will then be entirely on our side.

This, comrades, is what is contained in our resolution, and this, in my opinion, must become the decision of the Congress. If we adopt this, if it serves to determine the work of all our Party organisations, we shall cope with the second great task before us.

We have learned how to overthrow the bourgeoisie, how to suppress them, and we are proud of the fact. But we have not yet learned how to regulate our relations with the millions of middle peasants, how to win their confidence, and we must frankly admit it. But we have understood the task, we have set it, and we say in all confidence, with full knowledge and determination, that we shall cope with this task–and then socialism will be absolutely invincible. *(Prolonged applause.)*

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RESOLUTION OF THE EIGHTH CONGRESS OF THE R.C.P.(B.) ON THE ATTITUDE TO THE MIDDLE PEASANTS

Basing itself on the Party Programme adopted on March 22, 1919, insofar as it concerns work in the rural areas, and giving full support to the law already promulgated by the Soviet government on socialist land settlement and the measures for the transition to socialist farming, the Eighth Congress recognises that at the present time it is particularly important to adhere more strictly to the line of the Party in respect of the middle peasants, to display a more considerate attitude towards their needs, end arbitrary action on the part of the local authorities, and make an effort towards agreement with them.

1) To confuse the middle peasants with the kulaks and to extend to them in one or another degree measures directed against the kulaks is to violate most flagrantly not only all the decrees of the Soviet government and its entire policy, but also all the basic principles of communism, according to which agreement between the proletariat and the middle peasants is one of the conditions for a painless transition to the abolition of all exploitation in the period of decisive struggle waged by the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

2) The middle peasants, who have comparatively strong economic roots owing to the lagging of agricultural techniques behind industrial techniques even in the leading capitalist countries, to say nothing of Russia, will continue to exist for quite a long time after the beginning of the

proletarian revolution. Therefore, the tactics of the functionaries of the Soviets in the villages, as well as of Party functionaries, must envisage a long period of co-operation with the middle peasants.

3) The Party must at all costs ensure that all Soviet functionaries in the countryside have a clear and thorough grasp of the axiom of scientific socialism that the middle peasants are not exploiters since they do not profit by the labour of others. Such a class of small producers cannot lose by socialism, but, on the contrary, will gain a great deal by casting off the yoke of capital which exploits it in a thousand different ways even in a most democratic republic.

The correctly applied policy of Soviet power in the countryside, therefore, ensures alliance and agreement between the victorious proletariat and the middle peasants.

4) While encouraging co-operatives of all kinds as well as agricultural communes of middle peasants, representatives of Soviet power must not allow the slightest coercion to be used in setting them up. Associations are only worth while when they have been set up by the peasants themselves, on their own initiative, and the benefits of them have been verified in practice. Undue haste in this matter is harmful, for it can only strengthen prejudices against innovations among the middle peasants.

Representatives of Soviet power who permit themselves to employ not only direct but even indirect compulsion to bring peasants into communes must be brought strictly to account and removed from work in the countryside.

5) All arbitrary requisitioning, i.e., requisitioning not in conformity with the exact provisions of laws issued by the central authority, must be ruthlessly punished. The Congress insists on the strengthening of control in this field by the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, People's Commissariat of the Interior, and the All-Russia Central Executive Committee.

6) At the present time the extreme chaos which has been caused in all countries of the world by the four years of imperialist war in the predatory interests of the capitalists,

and which has become particularly acute in Russia, places the middle peasants in a difficult position.

In view of this, the law issued by the Soviet government on the emergency tax, as distinct from all the laws issued by all the bourgeois governments in the world, makes a point of laying the burden of the tax wholly on the kulaks, the inconsiderable number of peasant exploiters who particularly enriched themselves during the war. The middle peasants must be taxed very mildly, so that the sum levied is fully within their means and not burdensome to them.

The Party demands, in any case, lenience towards the middle peasants in collecting the emergency tax, even if this reduces the total revenue.

7) The socialist state must extend the widest possible aid to the peasants, mainly by supplying the middle peasants with products of urban industries and, especially, improved agricultural implements, seed and various materials in order to raise efficiency in agriculture and ensure improvement of the peasants' working and living conditions.

If the present economic chaos does not allow the immediate and full implementation of these measures, it remains the duty of local Soviet authorities to explore all possible avenues to render the poor and middle peasants any real aid to support them at the present difficult moment. The Party finds it necessary to establish a large state fund for this purpose.

8) In particular, efforts must be made to give real and full effect to the law issued by the Soviet government which requires of state farms, agricultural communes, and all other similar associations that they render immediate and all-round assistance to the middle peasants in their neighbourhood. Only on the basis of such actual assistance is it possible to achieve agreement with the middle peasants Only in this way can and must their confidence be won.

The Congress draws the attention of all Party workers to the need to put into effect immediately all the points set forth in the agrarian section of the Party Programme, namely:

(a) regulation of the use of land by the peasants (elimination of scattered holdings, the open field system, etc.), (b) supply of improved seeds and artificial fertilisers to the peasants, (c) improvement of the breeds of the peasants' livestock, (d) spreading of agronomical knowledge, (e) agronomical assistance to the peasants, (f) repair of the peasants' farm implements at repair shops belonging to the Soviets, (g) organisation of centres hiring out implements, experimental stations, model fields, etc., (h) improvements to the peasants' land.

9) Peasants' co-operative associations with the object of increasing agricultural production, and especially of processing farm produce, improvements to the peasants' land, support of handicraft industries, etc., must be accorded extensive aid, both financial and organisational, by the state.

10) The Congress reminds all concerned that neither the decisions of the Party nor the decrees of Soviet power have ever deviated from the line of agreement with the middle peasants. In the cardinal matter of the organisation of Soviet power in the countryside, for instance, a circular letter signed by the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissar for Food was issued when the Poor Peasants' Committees were established, pointing to the need to include in these Committees representatives of the middle peasants. When the Poor Peasants' Committees were abolished, the All-Russia Congress of Soviets again pointed to the need to include representatives of the middle peasants in the volost Soviets. The policy of the workers' and peasants' government and the Communist Party must in the future too be permeated by this spirit of agreement between the proletariat and the poor peasants on the one hand, and the middle peasants on the other.

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ECONOMICS AND POLITICS IN THE ERA OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

I had intended to write a short pamphlet on the subject indicated in the title on the occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet power. But owing to the rush of everyday work I have so far been unable to get beyond preliminary preparations for some of the sections. I have therefore decided to essay a brief, summarised exposition of what, in my opinion, are the most essential ideas on the subject. A summarised exposition, of course, possesses many disadvantages and shortcomings. Nevertheless, a short magazine article may perhaps achieve the modest aim in view, which is to present the problem and the groundwork for its discussion by the Communists of various countries.

1

Theoretically, there can be no doubt that between capitalism and communism there lies a definite transition period which must combine the features and properties of both these forms of social economy. This transition period has to be a period of struggle between dying capitalism and nascent communism—or, in other words, between capitalism which has been defeated but not destroyed and communism which has been born but is still very feeble.

The necessity for a whole historical era distinguished by these transitional features should be obvious not only to Marxists, but to any educated person who is in any degree acquainted with the theory of development. Yet all the talk on the subject of the transition to socialism which we hear from present-day petty-bourgeois democrats (and such, in

spite of their spurious socialist label, are all the leaders of the Second International, including such individuals as MacDonald, Jean Longuet, Kautsky and Friedrich Adler) is marked by complete disregard of this obvious truth. Petty-bourgeois democrats are distinguished by an aversion to class struggle, by their dreams of avoiding it, by their efforts to smooth over, to reconcile, to remove sharp corners. Such democrats, therefore, either avoid recognising any necessity for a whole historical period of transition from capitalism to communism or regard it as their duty to concoct schemes for reconciling the two contending forces instead of leading the struggle of one of these forces.

2

In Russia, the dictatorship of the proletariat must inevitably differ in certain particulars from what it would be in the advanced countries, owing to the very great backwardness and petty-bourgeois character of our country. But the basic forces–and the basic forms of social economy–are the same in Russia as in any capitalist country, so that the peculiarities can apply only to what is of lesser importance.

The basic forms of social economy are capitalism, petty commodity production, and communism. The basic forces are the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie (the peasantry in particular) and the proletariat.

The economic system of Russia in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat represents the struggle of labour, united on communist principles on the scale of a vast state and making its first steps–the struggle against petty commodity production and against the capitalism which still persists and against that which is newly arising on the basis of petty commodity production.

In Russia, labour is united communistically insofar as, first, private ownership of the means of production has been abolished, and, secondly, the proletarian state power is organising large-scale production on state-owned land and in state-owned enterprises on a national scale, is distributing labour-power among the various branches of pro-

duction and the various enterprises, and is distributing among the working people large quantities of articles of consumption belonging to the state.

We speak of "the first steps" of communism in Russia (it is also put that way in our Party Programme adopted in March 1919), because all these things have been only partially effected in our country, or, to put it differently, their achievement is only in its early stages. We accomplished instantly, at one revolutionary blow, all that can, in general, be accomplished instantly; on the first day of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for instance, on October 26 (November 8), 1917, the private ownership of land was abolished without compensation for the big landowners–the big landowners were expropriated. Within the space of a few months practically all the big capitalists, owners of factories, joint-stock companies, banks, railways, and so forth, were also expropriated without compensation. The state organisation of large-scale production in industry and the transition from "workers' control" to "workers' management" of factories and railways–this has, by and large, already been accomplished; but in relation to agriculture it has only just begun ("state farms", i.e., large farms organised by the workers' state on state-owned land). Similarly, we have only just begun the organisation of various forms of co-operative societies of small farmers as a transition from petty commodity agriculture to communist agriculture.* The same must be said of the state-organised distribution of products in place of private trade, i.e., the state procurement and delivery of grain to the cities and of industrial products to the countryside. Available statistical data on this subject will be given below.

Peasant farming continues to be petty commodity production. Here we have an extremely broad and very sound, deep-rooted basis for capitalism, a basis on which capital-

* The number of "state farms" and "agricultural communes" in Soviet Russia is, as far as is known, 3,536 and 1,961 respectively, and the number of agricultural artels is 3,696. Our Central Statistical Board is at present taking an exact census of all state farms and communes. The results will begin coming in in November 1919.

ism persists or arises anew in a bitter struggle against communism. The forms of this struggle are private speculation and profiteering versus state procurement of grain (and other products) and state distribution of products in general.

3

To illustrate these abstract theoretical propositions, let us quote actual figures.

According to the figures of the People's Commissariat of Food, state procurements of grain in Russia between August 1, 1917, and August 1, 1918, amounted to about 30,000,000 poods, and in the following year to about 110,000,000 poods. During the first three months of the next campaign (1919-20) procurements will presumably total about 45,000,000 poods, as against 37,000,000 poods for the same period (August-October) in 1918.

These figures speak clearly of a slow but steady improvement in the state of affairs from the point of view of the victory of communism over capitalism. This improvement is being achieved in spite of difficulties without world parallel, difficulties due to the Civil War organised by Russian and foreign capitalists who are harnessing all the forces of the world's strongest powers.

Therefore, in spite of the lies and slanders of the bourgeoisie of all countries and of their open or masked henchmen (the "socialists" of the Second International), one thing remains beyond dispute–as far as the basic economic problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat is concerned, the victory of communism over capitalism in our country is assured. Throughout the world the bourgeoisie is raging and fuming against Bolshevism and is organising military expeditions, plots, etc., against the Bolsheviks, because it realises full well that our success in reconstructing the social economy is inevitable, provided we are not crushed by military force. And its attempts to crush us in this way are not succeeding.

The extent to which we have already vanquished capitalism in the short time we have had at our disposal, and

despite the incredible difficulties under which we have had to work, will be seen from the following summarised figures. The Central Statistical Board has just prepared for the press data on the production and consumption of grain—not for the whole of Soviet Russia, but only for twenty-six gubernias. The results are as follows:

26 gubernias of Soviet Russia	Population in millions	Production of grain (excluding seed and fodder), million poods	Grain delivered, million poods		Total amount of grain at disposal of population, million poods	Grain consumption, poods per capita
			Commissariat of Food	Profiteers		
Producing gubernias	Urban 4.4	—	20.9	20.6	41.5	9.5
	Rural 28.6	625.4	—	—	481.8	16.9
Consuming gubernias	Urban 5.9	—	20.0	20.0	40.0	6.8
	Rural 13.8	114.0	12.1	27.8	151.4	11.0
Total (26 gubernias)	52.7	739.4	53.0	68.4	714.7	13.6

Thus, approximately half the amount of grain supplied to the cities is provided by the Commissariat of Food and the other half by profiteers. This same proportion is revealed by a careful survey, made in 1918, of the food consumed by city workers. It should be borne in mind that for bread supplied by the state the worker pays *one-ninth* of what he pays the profiteer. The profiteering price for bread is *ten times* greater than the state price; this is revealed by a detailed study of workers' budgets.

4

A careful study of the figures quoted shows that they present an exact picture of the fundamental features of Russia's present-day economy.

The working people have been emancipated from their age-old oppressors and exploiters, the landowners and

capitalists. This step in the direction of real freedom and real equality, a step which for its extent, dimensions and rapidity is without parallel in the world, is ignored by the supporters of the bourgeoisie (including the petty-bourgeois democrats), who, when they talk of freedom and equality, mean parliamentary bourgeois democracy, which they falsely declare to be "democracy" in general, or "pure democracy" (Kautsky).

But the working people are concerned only with real equality and real freedom (freedom from the landowners and capitalists), and that is why they give the Soviet government such solid support.

In this peasant country it was the peasantry as a whole who were the first to gain, who gained most, and gained immediately from the dictatorship of the proletariat. The peasant in Russia starved under the landowners and capitalists. Throughout the long centuries of our history, the peasant never had an opportunity to work for himself: he starved while handing over hundreds of millions of poods of grain to the capitalists, for the cities and for export. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat the peasant *for the first time* has been working for himself and *feeding better than the city dweller*. For the first time the peasant has seen real freedom–freedom to eat his bread, freedom from starvation. In the distribution of the land, as we know, the maximum equality has been established; in the vast majority of cases the peasants are dividing the land according to the number of "mouths to feed".

Socialism means the abolition of classes.

In order to abolish classes it is necessary, first, to overthrow the landowners and capitalists. This part of our task has been accomplished, but it is only a part, and moreover, *not* the most difficult part. In order to abolish classes it is necessary, secondly, to abolish the difference between factory worker and peasant, to make *workers of all of them*. This cannot be done all at once. This task is incomparably more difficult and will of necessity take a long time. It is not a problem that can be solved by overthrowing a class. It can be solved only by the organisational reconstruction

of the whole social economy, by a transition from individual, disunited, petty commodity production to large-scale social production. This transition must of necessity be extremely protracted. It may only be delayed and complicated by hasty and incautious administrative and legislative measures. It can be accelerated only by affording such assistance to the peasant as will enable him to effect an immense improvement in his whole farming technique, to reform it radically.

In order to solve the second and most difficult part of the problem, the proletariat, after having defeated the bourgeoisie, must unswervingly conduct its policy towards the peasantry along the following fundamental lines. The proletariat must separate, demarcate the working peasant from the peasant owner, the peasant worker from the peasant huckster, the peasant who labours from the peasant who profiteers.

In this demarcation lies the *whole essence* of socialism.

And it is not surprising that the socialists who are socialists in word but petty-bourgeois democrats in deed (the Martovs, the Chernovs, the Kautskys and others) do not understand this essence of socialism.

The demarcation we here refer to is an extremely difficult one, because in real life all the features of the "peasant", however diverse they may be, however contradictory they may be, are fused into one whole. Nevertheless, demarcation is possible; and not only is it possible, it inevitably follows from the conditions of peasant farming and peasant life. The working peasant has for ages been oppressed by the landowners, the capitalists, the hucksters and profiteers and by *their* state, including even the most democratic bourgeois republics. Throughout the ages the working peasant has trained himself to hate and loathe these oppressors and exploiters, and this "training", engendered by the conditions of life, *compels* the peasant to seek an alliance with the worker against the capitalist and against the profiteer and huckster. Yet at the same time, economic conditions, the conditions of commodity production, inevitably turn the peasant (not always,

but in the vast majority of cases) into a huckster and profiteer.

The statistics quoted above reveal a striking difference between the working peasant and the peasant profiteer. That peasant who during 1918-19 delivered to the hungry workers of the cities 40,000,000 poods of grain at fixed state prices, who delivered this grain to the state agencies despite all the shortcomings of the latter, shortcomings fully realised by the workers' government, but which were unavoidable in the first period of the transition to socialism—that peasant is a working peasant, the comrade and equal of the socialist worker, his most faithful ally, his blood brother in the fight against the yoke of capital. Whereas that peasant who clandestinely sold 40,000,000 poods of grain at ten times the state price, taking advantage of the need and hunger of the city worker, deceiving the state, and everywhere increasing and creating deceit, robbery and fraud—that peasant is a profiteer, an ally of the capitalist, a class enemy of the worker, an exploiter. For whoever possesses surplus grain gathered from land belonging to the whole state with the help of implements in which in one way or another is embodied the labour not only of the peasant but also of the worker and so on—whoever possesses a surplus of grain and profiteers in that grain is an exploiter of the hungry worker.

You are violators of freedom, equality, and democracy—they shout at us on all sides, pointing to the inequality of the worker and the peasant under our Constitution, to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, to the forcible confiscation of surplus grain, and so forth. We reply—never in the world has there been a state which has done so much to remove the actual inequality, the actual lack of freedom from which the working peasant has been suffering for centuries. But we shall never recognise equality with the peasant profiteer, just as we do not recognise "equality" between the exploiter and the exploited, between the sated and the hungry, nor the "freedom" for the former to rob the latter. And those educated people who refuse to recognise this difference we shall treat as whiteguards, even

though they may call themselves democrats, socialists, internationalists, Kautskys, Chernovs, or Martovs.

5

Socialism means the abolition of classes. The dictatorship of the proletariat has done all it could to abolish classes. But classes cannot be abolished at one stroke.

And classes still *remain* and *will remain* in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship will become unnecessary when classes disappear. Without the dictatorship of the proletariat they will not disappear.

Classes have remained, but in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat *every* class has undergone a change, and the relations between the classes have also changed. The class struggle does not disappear under the dictatorship of the proletariat; it merely assumes different forms.

Under capitalism the proletariat was an oppressed class, a class which had been deprived of the means of production, the only class which stood directly and completely opposed to the bourgeoisie, and therefore the only one capable of being revolutionary to the very end. Having overthrown the bourgeoisie and conquered political power, the proletariat has become the *ruling* class; it wields state power, it exercises control over means of production already socialised; it guides the wavering and intermediary elements and classes; it crushes the increasingly stubborn resistance of the exploiters. All these are *specific* tasks of the class struggle, tasks which the proletariat formerly did not and could not have set itself.

The class of exploiters, the landowners and capitalists, has not disappeared and cannot disappear all at once under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The exploiters have been smashed, but not destroyed. They still have an international base in the form of international capital, of which they are a branch. They still retain certain means of production in part, they still have money, they still have vast social connections. Because they have been defeated, the energy of their resistance has increased a hundred- and a thousandfold. The "art" of state, military and economic admi-

nistration gives them a superiority, and a very great superiority, so that their importance is incomparably greater than their numerical proportion of the population. The class struggle waged by the overthrown exploiters against the victorious vanguard of the exploited, i.e., the proletariat, has become incomparably more bitter. And it cannot be otherwise in the case of a revolution, unless this concept is replaced (as it is by all the heroes of the Second International) by reformist illusions.

Lastly, the peasants, like the petty bourgeoisie in general, occupy a half-way, intermediate position *even* under the dictatorship of the proletariat: on the one hand, they are a fairly large (and in backward Russia, a vast) mass of working people, united by the common interest of all working people to emancipate themselves from the landowner and the capitalist; on the other hand, they are disunited small proprietors, property-owners and traders. Such an economic position inevitably causes them to vacillate between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In view of the acute form which the struggle between these two classes has assumed, in view of the incredibly severe break-up of all social relations, and in view of the great attachment of the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie generally to the old, the routine, and the unchanging, it is only natural that we should inevitably find them swinging from one side to the other, that we should find them wavering, changeable, uncertain, and so on.

In relation to this class—or to these social elements—the proletariat must strive to establish its influence over it, to guide it. To give leadership to the vacillating and unstable—such is the task of the proletariat.

If we compare all the basic forces or classes and their interrelations, as modified by the dictatorship of the proletariat, we shall realise how unutterably nonsensical and theoretically stupid is the common petty-bourgeois idea shared by all representatives of the Second International, that the transition to socialism is possible "by means of democracy" in general. The fundamental source of this error lies in the prejudice inherited from the bourgeoisie

that "democracy" is something absolute and above classes. As a matter of fact, democracy itself passes into an entirely new phase under the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the class struggle rises to a higher level, dominating over each and every form.

General talk about freedom, equality and democracy is in fact but a blind repetition of concepts shaped by the relations of commodity production. To attempt to solve the concrete problems of the dictatorship of the proletariat by such generalities is tantamount to accepting the theories and principles of the bourgeoisie in their entirety. From the point of view of the proletariat, the question can be put only in the following way: freedom from oppression by which class? equality of which class with which? democracy based on private property, or on a struggle for the abolition of private property?–and so forth.

Long ago Engels in his *Anti-Dühring* explained that the concept "equality" is moulded from the relations of commodity production; equality becomes a prejudice if it is not understood to mean the *abolition of classes*. This elementary truth regarding the distinction between the bourgeois-democratic and the socialist conception of equality is constantly being forgotten. But if it is not forgotten, it becomes obvious that by overthrowing the bourgeoisie the proletariat takes the most decisive step towards the abolition of classes, and that in order to complete the process the proletariat must continue its class struggle, making use of the apparatus of state power and employing various methods of combating, influencing and bringing pressure to bear on the overthrown bourgeoisie and the vacillating petty bourgeoisie.

(To be continued*)

October 30, 1919

Pravda No. 250
and *Izvestia VTsIK* No. 250,
November 7, 1919
Signed: *N. Lenin*

Vol. 30, pp. 107-17

* The article was not completed.–*Ed.*

PRELIMINARY DRAFT THESES ON THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

(FOR THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL)

In his article,[34] Comrade Marchlewski gave an excellent explanation of the reasons why the Second International, which has now become the yellow International, failed, not only to define the revolutionary proletariat's tactics on the agrarian question, but even to pose that question properly. Comrade Marchlewski then went on to set forth the theoretical fundamentals of the Third International's communist agrarian programme.

These fundamentals can (and, I think, should) serve as the basis of the general resolution on the agrarian question for the Communist International Congress, which will meet on July 15, 1920.

The following is a preliminary draft of that resolution:

1. Only the urban and industrial proletariat, led by the Communist Party, can liberate the working masses of the countryside from the yoke of capital and landed proprietorship, from ruin and the imperialist wars which will inevitably break out again and again if the capitalist system remains. There is no salvation for the working masses of the countryside except in alliance with the communist proletariat, and unless they give the latter devoted support in its revolutionary struggle to throw off the yoke of the landowners (the big landed proprietors) and the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the industrial workers cannot accomplish their epoch-making mission of emancipating

mankind from the yoke of capital and from wars if they confine themselves to their narrow craft, or trade interests, and smugly restrict themselves to attaining an improvement in their own conditions, which may sometimes be tolerable in the petty-bourgeois sense. This is exactly what happens to the "labour aristocracy" of many advanced countries, who constitute the core of the so-called socialist parties of the Second International; they are actually the bitter enemies and betrayers of socialism, petty-bourgeois chauvinists and agents of the bourgeoisie within the working-class movement. The proletariat is a really revolutionary class and acts in a really socialist manner only when it comes out and acts as the vanguard of all the working and exploited people, as their leader in the struggle for the overthrow of the exploiters; this, however, cannot be achieved unless the class struggle is carried into the countryside, unless the rural working masses are united about the Communist Party of the urban proletariat, and unless they are trained by the proletariat.

2. The working and exploited people of the countryside, whom the urban proletariat must lead into the struggle or, at all events, win over, are represented in all capitalist countries by the following classes:

first, the agricultural proletariat, wage-labourers (by the year, season, or day), who obtain their livelihood by working for hire at capitalist agricultural enterprises. The organisation of this class (political, military, trade union, co-operative, cultural, educational, etc.) independently and separately from other groups of the rural population, the conduct of intensive propaganda and agitation among this class, and the winning of its support for the Soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat constitute the *fundamental* tasks of the Communist parties in all countries;

second, the semi-proletarians or peasants who till tiny plots of land, i.e., those who obtain their livelihood partly as wage-labourers at agricultural and industrial capitalist enterprises and partly by working their own or rented

plots of land, which provide their families only with part of their means of subsistence. This group of the rural working population is very numerous in all capitalist countries; its existence and special position are played down by the representatives of the bourgeoisie and by the yellow "socialists" belonging to the Second International, partly by deliberately deceiving the workers and partly by blindly submitting to the routine of petty-bourgeois views and lumping together this group with the mass of the "peasantry". This bourgeois method of duping the workers is to be seen mostly in Germany and in France, but also in America and other countries. If the work of the Communist Party is properly organised, this group will become its assured supporter, for the lot of these semi-proletarians is a very hard one and they stand to gain enormously and immediately from Soviet government and the dictatorship of the proletariat;

third, the small peasantry, i.e., the small-scale tillers who, either as owners or as tenants, hold small plots of land which enable them to satisfy the needs of their families and their farms, and do not hire outside labour. This stratum, as such, undoubtedly stands to gain by the victory of the proletariat, which will fully and immediately bring it: (a) deliverance from the necessity of paying the big landowners rent or a share of the crop (for example, the *metayers* in France, also in Italy and other countries); (b) deliverance from mortgages; (c) deliverance from the numerous forms of oppression by and dependence on the big landowners (forest lands and their use, etc.); (d) immediate aid for their farms from the proletarian state (the use of the agricultural implements and part of the buildings on the big capitalist farms confiscated by the proletariat and the immediate conversion, by the proletarian state, of the rural co-operative societies and agricultural associations from organisations which under capitalism served above all the rich and middle peasants, into organisations that will primarily assist the poor, i.e, proletarians, semi-proletarians, small peasants, etc.), and many other things.

At the same time the Communist Party must clearly realise that during the transitional period from capitalism to communism, i.e., during the dictatorship of the proletariat, this stratum, or at all events part of it, will inevitably vacillate towards unrestricted freedom of trade and the free enjoyment of the rights of private property. That is because this stratum, which, if only in a small way, is a seller of articles of consumption, has been corrupted by profiteering and by proprietary habits. However, if a firm proletarian policy is pursued, and if the victorious proletariat deals very resolutely with the big landowners and the big peasants, this stratum's vacillation cannot be considerable and cannot alter the fact that, on the whole, it will side with the proletarian revolution.

3. Taken together, the three groups enumerated above constitute the majority of the rural population in all capitalist countries. That is why the success of the proletarian revolution is fully assured, not only in the cities but in the countryside as well. The reverse view is widespread; however, it persists only, first, because of the deception systematically practised by bourgeois science and statistics, which do everything to gloss over both the gulf that separates the above-mentioned classes in the countryside from the exploiters, the landowners and capitalists, and that which separates the semi-proletarians and small peasants from the big peasants; second, it persists because of the inability and unwillingness of the heroes of the yellow Second International and of the "labour aristocracy" in the advanced countries, which has been corrupted by imperialist privileges, to conduct genuinely proletarian revolutionary work of propaganda, agitation and organisation among the rural poor; the attention of the opportunists has always been and still is wholly concentrated on inventing theoretical and practical compromises with the bourgeoisie, including the big and middle peasants (who are dealt with below), and not on the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois government and the bourgeoisie by the proletariat; it persists, third, because of the obstinate refusal to understand–so obsti-

nate as to be equivalent to a prejudice (connected with all the other bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices)–a truth which has been fully proved by Marxist theory and fully corroborated by the experience of the proletarian revolution in Russia, namely, that although the three enumerated categories of the rural population–who are incredibly downtrodden, disunited, crushed, and doomed to semi-barbarous conditions of existence in all countries, even the most advanced–are economically, socially, and culturally interested in the victory of socialism, they are capable of giving resolute support to the revolutionary proletariat only *after* the latter has won political power, only *after* it has resolutely dealt with the big landowners and capitalists, and only *after* these downtrodden people see *in practice* that they have an organised leader and champion, strong and firm enough to assist and lead them and to show them the right path.

4. In the economic sense, one should understand by "middle peasants" those small farmers who, (1) either as owners or tenants, hold plots of land that are also small but, under capitalism, are sufficient not only to provide, as a general rule, a meagre subsistence for the family and the bare minimum needed to maintain the farm, but also produce a certain surplus which may, in good years at least, be converted into capital; (2) quite frequently (for example, one farm out of two or three) resort to the employment of hired labour. A concrete example of the middle peasants in an advanced capitalist country is provided by the group of farms of five to ten hectares in Germany, in which, according to the census of 1907, the number of farms employing hired labourers is about one-third of the total number of farms in this group.* In France, where the cultivation of special crops

* Here are the exact figures: the number of farms of five to ten hectares–652,798 (out of a total of 5,736,082); these employed 487,704 hired labourers of various kinds, while the members of the farmers' families (*Familienangehörige*) working on the farms numbered 2,003,633. In Austria, according to the census of 1902, this group comprised 383,331 farms, of which 126,136 employed hired

is more developed–for example, grape-growing, which requires a very large amount of labour–this group probably employs outside hired labour to a somewhat greater extent.

The revolutionary proletariat cannot set itself the task–at least not in the immediate future or in the initial period of the dictatorship of the proletariat–of winning over this stratum, but must confine itself to the task of neutralising it, i.e., rendering it neutral in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This stratum inevitably vacillates between these two forces; in the beginning of the new epoch and in the developed capitalist countries, it will, in the main, incline towards the bourgeoisie. That is because the world outlook and the sentiments of the property-owners are prevalent among this stratum, which has a direct interest in profiteering, in "freedom" of trade and in property, and stands in direct antagonism to the wage-workers. By abolishing rent and mortgages, the victorious proletariat will immediately improve the position of this stratum. In most capitalist countries, however, the proletarian state should not at once completely abolish private property; at all events, it guarantees both the small and the middle peasantry, not only the preservation of their plots of land but also their enlargement to cover the total area they usually rented (the abolition of rent).

A combination of such measures with a ruthless struggle against the bourgeoisie fully guarantees the success of the policy of neutralisation. The proletarian state must effect the transition to collective farming with extreme caution and only very gradually, by the force of example, without any coercion of the middle peasant.

5. The big peasants *(Grossbauern)* are capitalist *entrepreneurs* in agriculture, who as a rule employ several hired labourers and are connected with the "peasantry" only in their low cultural level, habits of life, and the

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labour; the hired labourers working on these farms numbered 146,044 and the working members of the farmers' families, 1,265,969. The total number of farms in Austria was 2,856,349.

manual labour they themselves perform on their farms. These constitute the biggest of the bourgeois strata who are open and determined enemies of the revolutionary proletariat. In all their work in the countryside, the Communist parties must concentrate their attention mainly on the struggle against this stratum, on liberating the toiling and exploited majority of the rural population from the ideological and political influence of these exploiters, etc.

Following the victory of the proletariat in the cities, all sorts of manifestations of resistance and sabotage, as well as direct armed action of a counter-revolutionary character on the part of this stratum, are absolutely inevitable. The revolutionary proletariat must therefore immediately begin the ideological and organisational preparation of the forces necessary to completely disarm this stratum and, simultaneously with the overthrow of the capitalists in industry, to deal this stratum a most determined, ruthless and smashing blow at the very first signs of resistance; for this purpose, the rural proletariat must be armed and village Soviets organised, in which the exploiters must have no place, and in which proletarians and semi-proletarians must be ensured predominance.

However, the expropriation even of the big peasants can in no way be made an immediate task of the victorious proletariat, because the material and especially the technical conditions, as well as the social conditions, for the socialisation of such farms are still lacking. In individual and probably exceptional cases, those parts of their land which they rent out in small plots or which are particularly needed by the surrounding small-peasant population will be confiscated; the small peasants should also be guaranteed, on certain terms, the free use of part of the agricultural machinery belonging to the big peasants, etc. As a general rule, however, the proletarian state must allow the big peasants to retain their land, confiscating it only if they resist the power of the working and exploited people. The experience of the Russian proletarian evolution, in which the struggle against the big peasantry

was complicated and protracted by a number of special conditions, showed nevertheless that, when taught a severe lesson for the slightest attempt at resistance, this stratum is capable of loyally fulfilling the tasks set by the proletarian state, and even begins to be imbued although very slowly with respect for the government which protects all who work and is ruthless towards the idle rich.

The special conditions which, in Russia, complicated and retarded the struggle of the proletariat against the big peasants after it had defeated the bourgeoisie were, in the main, the following: after October 25 (November 7), 1917, the Russian revolution passed through the stage of the "general democratic"–that is, basically the bourgeois-democratic–struggle of the peasantry as a whole against the landowners; the cultural and numerical weakness of the urban proletariat; and, lastly, the enormous distances and extremely poor means of communication. Inasmuch as these retarding conditions do not exist in the advanced countries, the revolutionary proletariat of Europe and America should prepare far more energetically, and achieve far more rapidly, resolutely, and successfully, complete victory over the resistance of the big peasantry, completely depriving it of the slightest possibility of offering resistance. This is imperative because, until such a complete and absolute victory is achieved, the masses of the rural proletarians, semi-proletarians, and small peasants cannot be brought to accept the proletarian state as a fully stable one.

6. The revolutionary proletariat must immediately and unreservedly confiscate all landed estates, those of the big landowners, who, in capitalist countries–directly or through their tenant farmers–systematically exploit wage-labour and the neighbouring small (and, not infrequently, part of the middle) peasantry, do not themselves engage in manual labour, and are in the main descended from the feudal lords (the nobles in Russia, Germany, and Hungary, the restored seigneurs in France, the lords in Britain, and the former slave-owners in America), or are

rich financial magnates, or else a mixture of both these categories of exploiters and parasites.

Under no circumstances is it permissible for Communist parties to advocate or practise compensating the big landowners for the confiscated lands, for under present-day conditions in Europe and America this would be tantamount to a betrayal of socialism and the imposition of new tribute upon the masses of working and exploited people, to whom the war has meant the greatest hardships, while it has increased the number of millionaires and enriched them.

As to the mode of cultivation of the land that the victorious proletariat confiscates from the big landowners, the distribution of that land among the peasantry for their use has been predominant in Russia, owing to her economic backwardness; it is only in relatively rare and exceptional cases that state farms have been organised on the former estates which the proletarian state runs at its own expense, converting the former wage-labourers into workers for the state and members of the Soviets, which administer the state. The Communist International is of the opinion that in the case of the advanced capitalist countries it would be correct to keep *most* of the big agricultural enterprises intact and to conduct them on the lines of the "state farms" in Russia.

It would, however, be grossly erroneous to exaggerate or to stereotype this rule and never to permit the free grant of *part* of the land that belonged to the expropriated expropriators to the neighbouring small and sometimes middle peasants.

First, the objection usually raised to this, namely, that large-scale farming is technically superior, often amounts to an indisputable theoretical truth being replaced by the worst kind of opportunism and betrayal of the revolution. To achieve the success of this revolution, the proletariat should not shrink from a temporary decline in production, any more than the bourgeois opponents of slavery in North America shrank from a temporary decline in cotton production as a consequence of the Civil War of 1863-65.

What is most important to the bourgeois is production for the sake of production; what is most important to the working and exploited population is the overthrow of the exploiters and the creation of conditions that will permit the working people to work for themselves, and not for the capitalists. It is the primary and fundamental task of the proletariat to ensure the proletarian victory and its stability. There can, however, be no stable proletarian government unless the middle peasantry is neutralised and the support is secured of a very considerable section of the small peasantry, if not all of them.

Second, not merely an increase but even the preservation of large-scale production in agriculture presupposes the existence of a fully developed and revolutionarily conscious rural proletariat with considerable experience of trade union and political organisation behind it. Where this condition does not yet exist, or where this work cannot expediently be entrusted to class-conscious and competent industrial workers, hasty attempts to set up large state-conducted farms can only discredit the proletarian government. Under such conditions, the utmost caution must be exercised and the most thorough preparations made when state farms are set up.

Third, in all capitalist countries, even the most advanced, there still exist survivals of medieval, semi-feudal exploitation of the neighbouring small peasants by the big landowners as in the case of the *Instleute** in Germany, the *métayers* in France, and the sharecroppers in the United States (not only Negroes, who, in the Southern States, are mostly exploited in this way, but sometimes whites too). In such cases it is incumbent on the proletarian state to grant the small peasants free use of the lands they formerly rented, since no other economic or technical basis exists, and it cannot be created at one stroke.

The implements and stock of the big farms must be confiscated without fail and converted into state property

* Tenant farmers.–*Ed.*

with the absolute condition that, *after* the requirements of the big state farms have been met, the neighbouring small peasants may have the use of these implements gratis, in compliance with conditions drawn up by the proletarian state.

In the period immediately following the proletarian revolution, it is absolutely necessary, not only to confiscate the estates of the big landowners at once, but also to deport or to intern them all as leaders of counter-revolution and ruthless oppressors of the entire rural population. However, with the consolidation of the proletarian power in the countryside as well as in the cities, systematic efforts should be made to employ (under the special control of highly reliable communist workers) those forces within this class that possess valuable experience, knowhow, and organising skill, to build large-scale socialist agriculture.

7. The victory of socialism over capitalism and the consolidation of socialism may be regarded as ensured only when the proletarian state power, having completely suppressed all resistance by the exploiters and assured itself complete subordination and stability, has reorganised the whole of industry on the lines of large-scale collective production and on a modern technical basis (founded on the electrification of the entire economy). This alone will enable the cities to render such radical assistance, technical and social, to the backward and scattered rural population as will create the material basis necessary to boost the productivity of agricultural and of farm labour in general, thereby encouraging the small farmers by the force of example and in their own interests to adopt large-scale, collective and mechanised agriculture. Although nominally recognised by all socialists, this indisputable theoretical truth is in fact distorted by the opportunism prevalent in the yellow Second International and among the leaders of the German and the British "Independents", the French Longuetists, etc. This distortion consists in attention being directed towards the relatively remote, beautiful, and rosy future: attention is deflected from the

immediate tasks of the difficult practical transition and approach to that future. In practice, it consists in preaching a compromise with the bourgeoisie and a "class truce", i.e., complete betrayal of the proletariat, which is now waging a struggle amidst the unprecedented ruin and impoverishment created everywhere by the war, and amidst the unprecedented enrichment and arrogance of a handful of millionaires resulting from that war.

It is in the countryside that a genuine possibility of a successful struggle for socialism demands, [first] that all Communist parties should inculcate in the industrial proletariat a realisation of the need to make sacrifices, and be prepared to make sacrifices so as to overthrow the bourgeoisie and consolidate proletarian power–since the dictatorship of the proletariat implies both the ability of the proletariat to organise and lead all the working and exploited people, and the vanguard's ability to make the utmost sacrifices and to display the utmost heroism to that end; [second,] success demands that, as a result of the workers' victory, the labouring and most exploited masses in the countryside achieve an immediate and considerable improvement in their conditions at the expense of the exploiters–for without that the industrial proletariat cannot get the support of the rural areas and, in particular, will be unable to ensure the supply of food for the cities.

8. The enormous difficulty of organising and training for the revolutionary struggle the masses of rural working people, whom capitalism has reduced to a state of great wretchedness, disunity and frequently semi-medieval dependence, makes it necessary for the Communist parties to devote special attention to the strike struggle in the rural districts, give greater support to mass strikes by the agricultural proletarians and semi-proletarians, and help develop the strike movement in every way. The experience of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and of 1917, now confirmed and extended by the experience of Germany and other advanced countries, shows that the growing mass strike struggle (into which, under certain conditions, the small peasants can and should also be drawn) is alone

capable of rousing the countryside from its lethargy, awakening the class-consciousness of the exploited masses in the countryside, making them realise the need for class organisation, and revealing to them in a vivid and practical manner the importance of their alliance with the urban workers.

This Congress of the Communist International brands as traitors and renegades those socialists–to be found, unfortunately, not only in the yellow Second International, but also in the three very important European parties which have withdrawn from that International–who are not only capable of remaining indifferent to the strike struggle in the countryside, but even (like Karl Kautsky) of opposing it on the grounds that it threatens to reduce the output of articles of consumption. Neither programmes nor the most solemn declarations are of any value whatever unless it is proved in practice, in deed, that the Communists and workers' leaders are able to place above everything else in the world the development and the victory of the proletarian revolution, and to make the greatest sacrifices for it, for otherwise there is no way out, no salvation from starvation, ruin, and new imperialist wars.

In particular, it should be pointed out that the leaders of the old socialist movement and representatives of the "labour aristocracy"–who now often make verbal concessions to communism and even nominally side with it in order to preserve their prestige among the worker masses, which are rapidly becoming revolutionary–should be tested for their loyalty to the cause of the proletariat and their suitability for responsible positions in those spheres of work where the development of revolutionary consciousness and the revolutionary struggle is most marked, the resistance of the landowners and the bourgeoisie (the big peasants, the kulaks) most fierce, and the difference between the socialist compromiser and the communist revolutionary most striking.

9. The Communist parties must exert every effort to begin, as speedily as possible, to set up Soviets of Deputies in the countryside, and in the first place Soviets of

hired labourers and semi-proletarians. Only if they are linked up with the mass strike struggle and with the most oppressed class can the Soviets perform their functions, and become consolidated enough to influence (and later to incorporate) the small peasants. If, however, the strike struggle has not yet developed, and the agricultural proletariat is as yet incapable of strong organisation owing both to the severe oppression by the landowners and the big peasants and to lack of support from the industrial workers and their unions, then the formation of Soviets of Deputies in the rural areas will require lengthy preparation by means of the organisation of communist cells, even if only small ones, intensified agitation–in which the demands of communism are enunciated in the simplest manner and illustrated by the most glaring examples of exploitation and oppression–and the arrangement of systematic visits of industrial workers to the rural districts, and so on.

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REPORT ON THE TAX IN KIND DELIVERED AT THE TENTH ALL-RUSSIA CONFERENCE OF THE R.C.P.(B.) May 26, 1921

Comrades, I had occasion to discuss, for the benefit of the Party, the question of the tax in kind in a pamphlet with which, I suppose, the majority of you are familiar. That this question has been brought up for discussion at a Party conference came as a surprise to me, for I had not seen anything to indicate that this was called for. But very many of the comrades who have visited the localities, notably Comrade Osinsky upon his return from a tour of a number of gubernias, informed the Central Committee –and this was corroborated by several other comrades– that locally the policy which had taken shape in connection with the tax in kind remained largely unexplained and partly even misunderstood. In view of its exceptional importance, additional discussion at a Party conference seemed so necessary that it was decided to convene the conference earlier than scheduled.

You are aware that we in the Central Committee have decided to divide the report on this point into four parts, to be given by four rapporteurs: Kamenev, on the work of the co-operatives; Milyutin, on small-scale industry; Comrade Sviderský, on the precise calculations and proposals of the People's Commissariat for Food, and the related organisational measures; the instructions and regulations on the tax system, partly approved, and partly to be approved shortly, by the Council of People's Commissars, are of especial importance in this connection.

Finally, Comrade Khinchuk is to be the fourth rapporteur; he has been relieved of all his duties in the People's Commissariat for Food to allow him to concentrate entirely on the co-operatives, as Chairman of Tsentrosoyuz.*

It has been decided, as the chief principle, that the commodity exchange in this case is to be handled by the People's Commissariat for Food, mostly and even chiefly, through Tsentrosoyuz and the co-operatives. These relations between the People's Commissariat for Food and Tsentrosoyuz should be formalised in an agreement, stating that all the goods available for exchange shall be handed over by the People's Commissariat for Food to Tsentrosoyuz. This makes the latter's role quite clear, and there is no need to go into it in detail. Thus, it has fallen to me to introduce the question of the general significance of this policy, and I should merely like to supplement what I have already said in the pamphlet. I have no direct information as to how this question is being presented in the localities or to the flaws, defects and unclarity that there prevail. I may have to elaborate certain points later on, when it becomes clearer from the questions that are raised at the conference, or from the subsequent debate, how the local officials and the Party are to be oriented.

As far as I can see, the misunderstandings and lack of clarity on the political tasks connected with the tax in kind and the New Economic Policy[35] are perhaps due to the exaggeration of this or that aspect of the matter. But until we have organised this work on practical lines, these exaggerations are absolutely inevitable; and until we have carried out at least one food campaign on the new lines, it will hardly be possible at all to give any precise definition to the real limits for the application of this or that specific feature of this policy. I shall deal only in general outline with some of the contradictions which, as far as I could judge from several notes sent up at the meeting, have given rise to most misunderstanding. The

* Central Council of Co-operative Societies.—*Tr.*

tax in kind and the attendant changes in our policy are often interpreted as a sign of a drastic reversal of policy. It is not surprising that this interpretation is taken up and made most of by the whiteguard, particularly the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik, press abroad. I do not know whether it is due to the operation of similar influences which have made themselves felt on the territory of the R.S.F.S.R., or to the acute discontent which was, and perhaps still is, evident in certain circles, owing to the extreme aggravation of the food situation, but this sort of perplexity may have spread to some extent even in this country and created what is largely a wrong conception of the significance of the change that has been brought about and of the character of the new policy.

Naturally, in view of the fact that the peasantry preponderates enormously among the population, the principal task–of our policy in general, and of our economic policy in particular–is to establish definite relations between the working class and the peasantry. For the first time in modern history we have a social system from which the exploiting class has been eliminated but in which there are two different classes–the working class and the peasantry. The enormous preponderance of the peasantry could not but have an effect on our economic policy, and our policy in general. The principal problem that still confronts us–and will inevitably confront us for many years to come–is that of establishing proper relations between these two classes, proper from the standpoint of abolishing classes. The enemies of the Soviet power discuss the formula of agreement between the working class and the peasantry with such frequency, and so very often use it against us, because it is so vague. Agreement between the working class and the peasantry may be taken to mean anything. Unless we assume that, from the working-class standpoint, an agreement is possible in principle, permissible, and correct only if it supports the dictatorship of the working class and is one of the measures aimed at the abolition of classes, then,

of course, it remains a formula on which all the enemies of the Soviet power, all the enemies of the dictatorship, operate. How is this agreement to be realised in the first period of our revolution, i.e., the period which we can now approximately consider as coming to a close? How was the dictatorship of the proletariat maintained and consolidated amidst the enormous preponderance of the peasant population? It is the Civil War that was the principal reason, the principal motive force, and the principal determinant of our agreement. Although, in many cases, the Civil War was started with the white-guards, the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and the Mensheviks jointly participating in the alliance against us, it invariably led to all the Socialist-Revolutionary Constituent Assembly and Menshevik elements finding themselves–either through a *coup d'état* or otherwise–driven into the background, which left the capitalist and landowner elements to head the whiteguard movement. That was the case under Kolchak and Denikin, and all the numerous smaller regimes and during campaigns against us. It was the principal factor that determined the form of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry. This circumstance multiplied our incredible difficulties, but upon the other hand, it spared us the necessity of racking our brains over how to apply the alliance formula, for it and the conditions of its realisation were both dictated by the circumstances of war, leaving us no choice whatsoever.

Only the working class could exercise the dictatorship in the form demanded by the Civil War and its conditions. The participation of the landowners in this war united the working class and the peasantry absolutely, unreservedly and irrevocably. In that respect there was no internal political wavering whatsoever. Amidst the gigantic difficulties that confronted us because Russia was cut off from her principal grain areas and food hardships had been aggravated to the extreme, we could not have carried out our food policy in practice without the appropriation of surplus grain. This meant taking not

only the surplus stocks of grain, which would hardly have sufficed even if they had been properly distributed. I cannot here deal in detail with the irregularities which the system brought in its train. At all events, it served its main purpose–keeping industry going even when we were almost completely cut off from the grain districts. But this could have been at all satisfactory only in conditions of war. As soon as we had finally done away with the external enemy–and this became a fact only in 1921–another task confronted us, the task of establishing an *economic* alliance between the working class and the peasantry. It was only in the spring of 1921 that we actually got down to this task, and that was when the 1920 crop failure had worsened the condition of the peasantry to an incredible degree, and when we first witnessed some internal political wavering, which did not result from external enemy pressure, but from the relations between the working class and the peasantry. If we had had a very good, or at least a good, harvest in 1920, if the surplus appropriations had yielded 400 million out of the planned 420 million poods of grain, we would have been able to fulfil the greater part of our industrial programme and would have had a stock of manufactured urban goods to exchange for agricultural produce. But the opposite happened. A fuel crisis, even more acute than the food crisis, developed in some places and it was utterly impossible to satisfy the needs of the peasant farms in urban manufactures. Peasant farming was gripped by an incredibly acute crisis. Those were the circumstances that suggested that we could not possibly continue with the old food policy. We had to bring up the question of what economic basis we required immediately for the alliance between the working class and the peasantry as a stepping stone to further measures.

The stepping stone is to prepare the exchange of industrial goods for agricultural produce; to create a system under which the peasant would not have to surrender his produce otherwise than in exchange for urban and factory-made goods, but which would not subordinate

him to any of the forms existing under the capitalist system. In view of the prevailing economic conditions, however, we could not even think about that. That is why we have adopted the transitional form I have spoken about, namely, to take produce in the form of a tax without giving any equivalent, and to obtain additional produce through the medium of exchange. But this requires an appropriate fund; ours is extremely small, and the possibility of augmenting it through foreign trade has arisen only this year, as a result of a number of agreements with capitalist countries. It is true that these are as yet a mere introduction, a foreword; no real trade has yet begun. There is continued sabotage and all sorts of attempts to disrupt these agreements by most or the greater part of the capitalist circles, and the most characteristic thing is that the Russian whiteguard press, including the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik press, is hammering away at these agreements with more venom than at anything else. It is absolutely clear that the bourgeoisie is better prepared for the fight, that it is more developed than the proletariat, that its class-consciousness has been given a keener edge by all the "trouble" it has had to put up with, and that it is betraying an abnormal sensitiveness. A close look at the whiteguard press will show that it is hitting out at the very point that is the centre, the pivot, of our policy.

After the failure of the military invasion, which has quite obviously collapsed, although the struggle is still on, the whole of the whiteguard Russian press has set itself an unattainable aim: to tear up the trade agreements. The campaign which was started this spring on an extremely extensive scale, with the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in the forefront of the counter-revolutionary forces, had a definite aim–to tear up the economic agreements between Russia and the capitalist world by this spring; and to a considerable extent they succeeded in achieving their aim. It is true that we have concluded the principal agreements–their number is increasing–and we are overcoming the growing resistance to them. But there

has been a very dangerous delay; for, without some assistance from abroad, rehabilitation of large-scale industry and restoration of regular exchange of commodities will either be impossible or will mean very dangerous delay. These are the conditions in which we are obliged to act, and these are the conditions which for the peasants have brought the question of restoring trade to the forefront. I shall not deal with the question of concessions, because it has been debated most at Party meetings, and has not lately given rise to any perplexity. The position is that we are continuing our assiduous offers of concessions, but the foreign capitalists have not yet received a single sizable concession, and we have not yet concluded any really serious concessions agreement. The whole difficulty lies in finding a way of enlisting West-European capital that has been tested in practice.

Theoretically, it is absolutely indisputable–and it seems to me that everyone's doubts on this score have been dispelled–theoretically, I say, it is absolutely clear that it would be to our advantage to pay off European capital with a few score or hundreds of millions, which we could give it in order to augment, in the shortest possible time, our stocks of equipment, materials, raw materials and machinery for the purpose of restoring our large-scale industry.

Large-scale industry is the one and only real basis upon which we can multiply our resources and build a socialist society. Without large factories, such as capitalism has created, without highly developed large-scale industry, socialism is impossible anywhere; still less is it possible in a peasant country, and we in Russia have a far more concrete knowledge of this than before; so that instead of speaking about restoring large-scale industry in some indefinite and abstract way, we now speak of the definite, precisely calculated and concrete plan of electrification. We have a precise plan projected by the best Russian specialists and scientists, a plan which gives us a definite picture of the resources, considering Russia's natural features, with which we can, must and will lay the basis

of large-scale industry for our economy. Without it, no real socialist foundation for our economic life is possible. This remains absolutely indisputable, and if, in connection with the tax in kind, we have lately spoken about it in abstract terms, we must now say definitely that we must first of all restore large-scale industry. I myself have heard statements of this kind from several comrades, and all I could do in reply was, of course, to shrug my shoulders. It is absolutely ridiculous and absurd to assume that we could ever lose sight of this fundamental aim. The only question that arises here is: how could such doubts and perplexity arise in the minds of comrades, and how could they think that this key task, without which the material production basis of socialism is impossible, has been pushed into the background? These comrades must have misunderstood the relation between our state and small industry. Our main task is to restore large-scale industry, but in order to approach this task at all seriously and systematically we must restore small industry. Both this year, 1921, and last year, we had great gaps in our efforts to restore large-scale industry.

In the autumn and winter of 1920 we started several important branches of our large-scale industry, but we had to suspend them again. Why? Many factories were able to obtain enough manpower and sufficient supplies of raw materials; why then was work at these factories suspended? Because we were short of food and fuel. Without a state reserve of 400 million poods of grain (I take an approximate figure) backed up by regular monthly allotments, it is difficult to talk about any sort of regular economic development or of restoring large-scale industry. Without it we find that after having started work on restoring large-scale industry and continuing it for several months we have had to suspend it again. Most of the few factories that were started are now idle. Without fully assured and adequate food stocks the state cannot concentrate on systematically organising the rehabilitation of large-scale industry, organising it on a modest scale, perhaps, but in such a way as to keep it going continuously.

As regards fuel, until the Donbas is restored, and until we obtain a regular supply of oil, we shall have to continue to rely on timber, on firewood, which again means dependence on small-scale production.

That explains the mistake of those comrades who failed to understand why it is the peasant who must now be placed in the centre of things. Some workers say: the peasants are being favoured, but we get nothing. I have heard such talk, but I must say I think it is not very widespread, for such talk is dangerous, because it echoes the Socialist-Revolutionaries. It is an obvious political provocation; and is, besides, a survival of craft—not class—but craft-union prejudices of workers, when the working class regards itself a part of equitable capitalist society and fails to realise that it still stands on the old capitalist basis. These workers say, in fact: the peasant is being favoured, he has been relieved of surplus-grain appropriation, he is allowed to retain his grain surplus for the purpose of exchange; we workers at the bench want to have the same thing.

What is at the bottom of this point of view? It is, in essence, the old petty-bourgeois ideology: since the peasants are a component part of capitalist society, the working class also remains a component part of this society; hence, if the peasant trades, we too must trade. Here we undoubtedly see a revival of the old prejudices which grapple the worker to the old world. The Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks are the most ardent and, in fact, the only sincere, champions of the old capitalist world. You will find none among the hundreds, the thousands, and even the hundreds of thousands in all the other camps. But these rare specimens remain among the so-called pure democrats, whom the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks represent. And the more persistently they advocate their views, the more dangerous is their influence over the working class. They are doubly dangerous when the working class has to go through periods of suspended production. The principal material basis for the development of proletarian class-consciousness is large-scale

industry, where the worker sees the factories running, and daily feels the power that can really abolish classes.

When the workers lose their footing in this material production basis, some of them are beset by a sense of instability, uncertainty, despair and scepticism, and this has a definite effect when combined with outright provocations by our bourgeois democrats, i.e., the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. This produces a mentality which makes people, even in the ranks of the Communist Party, reason in this way: the peasants were given a handout; for the same reasons, and by the same methods, a handout should be given to the workers. We have had to yield to this mentality to some extent. The decree on bonuses to workers in the form of a part of the goods they produce is, of course, a concession to these sentiments, which have their roots in the past and are engendered by scepticism and despair. Within certain small limits, this concession was necessary. It has been made. But we must not for a moment forget that we have been making a concession that is necessary from no other standpoint but the economic one: the interests of the proletariat. Its basic and most vital interests are bound up with the rehabilitation of large-scale industry as a solid economic foundation. When that is done, it will consolidate its dictatorship, it will be sure to carry its dictatorship to success, in the teeth of all the political and military difficulties. Why, then, were we obliged to make a concession, and why would it be extremely dangerous to give it a wider interpretation than it deserves? It is only because temporary food and fuel difficulties compelled us to take this path.

What is the principal economic determinant of the policy when we say, "We must not base our relations with the peasants on surplus-grain appropriation but on a tax"? It is that under the surplus-grain appropriation system the small peasant farms have no proper economic basis and are doomed to remain dead for many years. Small farming cannot exist and develop, because the petty farmer loses interest in consolidating and developing his activity and in increasing his output, all of which leaves us without an

economic basis. We have no other basis or source, and unless the state is able to accumulate large stocks of food it is no use thinking about the rehabilitation of large-scale industry. That is why we are first of all applying this policy which is changing our food relations.

We are conducting this policy so as to have a fund for the rehabilitation of large-scale industry; to relieve the working class from all interruption of work, which should not be experienced even by our large-scale industry, miserable though it is when compared with that of the advanced countries; to relieve the proletarian of the need to find the means of subsistence by resorting to the petty-bourgeois method of profiteering, which is not a proletarian method and threatens us with the gravest economic dangers. Owing to our present deplorable conditions, proletarians are obliged to earn a living by methods which are not proletarian and are not connected with large-scale industry. They are obliged to procure goods by petty-bourgeois profiteering methods, either by stealing, or by making them for themselves in a publicly-owned factory, in order to barter them for agricultural produce–and that is the main economic danger, jeopardising the existence of the Soviet system. The proletariat must now exercise its dictatorship in such a way as to have a sense of security as a class, with a firm footing. But the ground is slipping from under its feet. Instead of large, continuously running factories, the proletarian sees something quite different, and is compelled to enter the economic sphere as a profiteer, or as a small producer.

We must spare no sacrifice in this transitional period to save the proletariat from this. To ensure the continuous, if slow, rehabilitation of large-scale industry we must not hesitate to throw sops to the greedy foreign capitalists, because, from the standpoint of building socialism, it is at present to our advantage to overpay the foreign capitalists some hundreds of millions in order to obtain the machines and materials for the rehabilitation of large-scale industry, which will restore the economic basis of the proletariat, and will transform it into a steadfast proletariat, instead

of one engaged in profiteering. The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries have deafened us with their shouts that since the proletariat has been declassed, we ought to abandon the tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat. They have been shouting that since 1917, and the surprising thing is that they have not grown tired of shouting it up to 1921. But when we hear these attacks we do not say that there has been no declassing, and that there are no flaws. What we say is that Russian and international realities are such that even though the proletariat has to go through a period when it is declassed, and has to suffer from these handicaps, it can nevertheless fulfil its task of winning and holding political power.

It would be absurd and ridiculous to deny that the fact that the proletariat is declassed is a handicap. By 1921, we realised that after the struggle against the external enemy, the main danger and the greatest evil confronting us was our inability to ensure the continuous operation of the few remaining large enterprises. This is the main thing. Without such an economic basis, the working class cannot firmly hold political power. In order to ensure the continued rehabilitation of large-scale industry we must organise the food supply in such a way as to collect and properly distribute a fund of, say, 400 million poods. It would be utterly impossible for us to collect it through the old surplus-grain appropriation system: 1920 and 1921 are proof of this. Now we see that we can nonetheless fulfil this extremely difficult task by means of the tax in kind. We cannot fulfil it with the old methods, and so we must try some new ones. It can be done by means of the tax in kind and by establishing proper relations with the peasant as a small producer. We have devoted considerable effort to prove this theoretically.

I think, judging by the Party press and by what is being said at meetings, that it has been fully proved theoretically that this task can be fulfilled if the proletariat retains possession of the transport system, the big factories, the economic basis as well as political power. We must give the peasant a fair amount of leeway as a small producer.

Unless we revive peasant farming we shall not solve the food problem.

It is within this framework that we must deal with the question of developing small industry on the basis of unrestricted trade and free turnover. This free turnover is a means to establish economically stable relations between the working class and the peasantry. We now have more and more precise data on agricultural output. A pamphlet on grain output was distributed at the Party Congress; it was still in proofs when it was distributed to the delegates. Since then the material contained in it has been supplemented and circulated. The pamphlet in its final form has now been sent to the press, but it is not yet ready for the conference, and I am unable to say whether it will be ready before the conference comes to a close and the delegates disperse. We shall do all we can to get it out in time, but we cannot promise to do so.

This is a small part of our effort to determine, as precisely as possible, the position in regard to agricultural output, and the resources at our disposal.

Still, we can say that there is evidence that we are quite able to solve this economic problem, particularly this year, when the harvest prospects are not too bad, or not as bad as we anticipated in spring. This assures us of the possibility of accumulating an agricultural reserve that will enable us to devote ourselves entirely to the task of steadily, even if slowly, restoring our large-scale industry.

In order to solve the problem of accumulating food stocks for industry we must devise a form of relations with the peasant, the small proprietor, and there is no other form except that of the tax in kind; no one has come up with another form, and none can be imagined. But we must have a practical solution of this problem: we must arrange to have the tax collected in a proper manner, and not in the old way, when grain was taken two or three times, leaving the peasant in a worse plight than ever, inflicting the most suffering on the more industrious

and destroying every possibility of establishing economically stable relations. The tax in kind, while also a levy on every peasant, must be collected in a different way. On the basis of the collected and published data we can say that the tax in kind will now bring about a crucial change, but whether it will cover everything is still, to some extent, an open question. Of one thing we can be quite certain, however, and it is that we must bring about an immediate improvement in the condition of the peasant.

The task that confronts the local workers is to collect the tax in kind in full, and do so in the shortest possible time. The difficulties are increased by the fact that the harvest promises to be an unusually early one this year, and if our preparations are based on the customary dates, we run the risk of being too late. That is why the early convocation of the Party conference was important and opportune. We must work more quickly than before to prepare the apparatus for collecting the tax in kind. The accumulation of a minimum state fund of 240 million poods of grain and the possibility of making the position of the peasant secure depend on the speed with which the tax in kind is collected. Delay in collecting it will cause a certain amount of inconvenience to the peasant. The tax will not be paid voluntarily, we shall not be able to dispense with coercion, for the levy imposes some restrictions on the peasant farm. If we drag out the process of collecting the tax, the peasant will be discontent and will say that he is not free to dispose of his surplus. If the freedom is to be such in practice, the tax must be collected quickly; the tax-collector must not hover over the peasant for long, and so the period between the harvesting and the collection of the tax in full must be reduced to a minimum.

That is one task. The other is to maximise the peasant's freedom of trade and the revival of small-scale industry, so as to allow some leeway to the capitalism that grows up on the basis of small private property and petty trade. We should not be afraid of it, for it is not dangerous to us in the least.

We need not fear it at all in view of the general economic and political situation that has now arisen, with the proletariat controlling all the sources of large-scale production, and denationalisation in any shape or form entirely out of the question. At a time when we are suffering most of all from a severe shortage of goods and utter impoverishment, it is ridiculous to fear the threat of capitalism based on small commercial agriculture. To fear it is to fail altogether to take account of the relation of forces in our economy. It means to fail to understand that the peasant economy, as a small-scale peasant economy, cannot be stable at all without some free exchange and the attendant capitalist relations.

This is what you must firmly impress on your minds, comrades. And our main task is to give a push to the comrades in all localities, to give them the utmost scope for initiative, to stimulate them to display the utmost self-reliance and boldness. In this respect we are still suffering from the fear of doing things on a really wide scale. We have no more or less definitely tabulated local data showing from practical experience what the situation is in regard to local goods exchange and trade, what success has been achieved in restoring and developing small industry–which can alleviate the condition of the peasant right away, without the great effort of transporting large stocks of food and fuel to the industrial centres that large-scale industry entails. From the general economic standpoint, not enough is being done locally in this respect. We have no information on this from the localities, we do not know what the position is all over the Republic, we have no examples of really well-organised work; and my impression is that the Trade Union Congress and the Congress of the Supreme Economic Council have none either.

Here again, the principal defect of these congresses is that we devote ourselves mainly to such threadbare things as theses, general programmes and arguments, instead of giving the participants a chance to swap local experience and say, on returning home: "Out of a thousand examples we heard one good one, and we shall follow it." Actually,

we have not only one good example in a thousand, we have many more; but least of all do we see congress work arranged in this way.

I have no wish to forestall events, but I must say a word or two about collective supplies for the workers, i.e., about the proposal to substitute for the ration system a system under which certain factories that are actually in operation will be assured of a certain quantity of food in proportion to their output. The idea is an excellent one, but we have turned it into something semi-fantastic, without however doing any real preparatory work for it. We have no example as yet of any particular factory, even one employing a small number of workers, in a particular uyezd, having tried out this system and having secured such-and-such results. That is something we do not as yet have, and it is one of the greatest drawbacks in our work. We must keep repeating that instead of discussing general problems, which was all very well in 1918, i.e., in the long distant past, we must, in this 1921, discuss practical problems. By telling congresses first of all about the examples of well-organised work–there are quite enough of them–we would make it an obligation for the rest to strive to imitate the best that has been achieved in a few rare and exceptional localities. I have in mind the work of the Trade Union Congress, but it also applies to all work connected with the food problem.

Quite a lot has been done in some cases, in a few localities, to prepare for the collection of the tax in kind, the organisation of trade, etc., but we have not managed to study this experience; and the great task that confronts us now is to induce the vast majority of the localities to follow the example of the best. Our task now is to study practical experience and raise the backward and medium uyezds and volosts, the standard of which is absolutely unsatisfactory, to the level of the insignificant number of highly satisfactory ones. At our congresses we must shift our main attention from the study of general theses and programmes of meetings to the study of practical experience, to the study of the examples set by the satis-

factory and highly satisfactory districts, and to raising the backward and medium ones, which predominate, to the level of these good ones, which may be few but are still there.

Those are the remarks to which I must confine myself. (*Applause.*)

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ON CO-OPERATION

I

It seems to me that not enough attention is being paid to the co-operative movement in our country. Not everyone understands that now, since the time of the October Revolution and quite apart from NEP (on the contrary, in this connection we must say–because of NEP), our co-operative movement has become one of great significance. There is a lot of fantasy in the dreams of the old co-operators. Often they are ridiculously fantastic. But why are they fantastic? Because people do not understand the fundamental, the rock-bottom significance of the working-class political struggle for the overthrow of the rule of the exploiters. We have overthrown the rule of the exploiters, and much that was fantastic, even romantic, even banal in the dreams of the old co-operators is now becoming unvarnished reality.

Indeed, since political power is in the hands of the working class, since this political power owns all the means of production, the only task, indeed, that remains for us is to organise the population in co-operative societies. With most of the population organised in co-operatives, the socialism which in the past was legitimately treated with ridicule, scorn and contempt by those who were rightly convinced that it was necessary to wage the class struggle, the struggle for political power, etc., will achieve its aim automatically. But not all comrades realise how vastly, how infinitely important it is now to organise

the population of Russia in co-operative societies. By adopting NEP we made a concession to the peasant as a trader, to the principle of private trade; it is precisely for this reason (contrary to what some people think) that the co-operative movement is of such immense importance. All we actually need under NEP is to organise the population of Russia in co-operative societies on a sufficiently large scale, for we have now found that degree of combination of private interest, of private commercial interest, with state supervision and control of this interest, that degree of its subordination to the common interests which was formerly the stumbling-block for very many socialists. Indeed, the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc.—is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society out of co-operatives, out of co-operatives alone, which we formerly ridiculed as huckstering and which from a certain aspect we have the right to treat as such now, under NEP? Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society? It is still not the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for it.

It is this very circumstance that is underestimated by many of our practical workers. They look down upon our co-operative societies, failing to appreciate their exceptional importance, first, from the standpoint of principle (the means of production are owned by the state), and, second, from the standpoint of transition to the new system by means that are the *simplest, easiest and most acceptable to the peasant.*

But this again is of fundamental importance. It is one thing to draw up fantastic plans for building socialism through all sorts of workers' associations, and quite another to learn to build socialism in practice in such a way that *every* small peasant could take part in it. That is the very stage we have now reached. And there is no

doubt that, having reached it, we are taking too little advantage of it.

We went too far when we introduced NEP, but not because we attached too much importance to the principle of free enterprise and trade–we went too far because we lost sight of the co-operatives, because we now underrate the co-operatives, because we are already beginning to forget the vast importance of the co-operatives from the above two points of view.

I now propose to discuss with the reader what can and must at once be done practically on the basis of this "co-operative" principle. By what means can we, and must we, start at once to develop this "co-operative" principle so that its socialist meaning may be clear to all?

Co-operation must be politically so organised that it will not only generally and always enjoy certain privileges, but that these privileges should be of a purely material nature (a favourable bank-rate, etc.). The co-operatives must be granted state loans that are greater, if only by a little, than the loans we grant to private enterprises, even to heavy industry, etc.

A social system emerges only if it has the financial backing of a definite class. There is no need to mention the hundreds of millions of rubles that the birth of "free" capitalism cost. At present we have to realise that the co-operative system is the social system we must now give more than ordinary assistance, and we must actually give that assistance. But it must be assistance in the real sense of the word, i.e., it will not be enough to interpret it to mean assistance for any kind of co-operative trade; by assistance we must mean aid to co-operative trade in which *really large masses of the population actually take part*. It is certainly a correct form of assistance to give a bonus to peasants who take part in co-operative trade; but the whole point is to verify the nature of this participation, to verify the awareness behind it, and to verify its quality. Strictly speaking, when a co-operator goes to a village and opens a co-operative store, the people take

no part in this whatever; but at the same time guided by their own interests they will hasten to try to take part in it.

There is another aspect to this question. From the point of view of the "enlightened" (primarily, literate) European there is not much left for us to do to induce absolutely everyone to take not a passive, but an active part in co-operative operations. Strictly speaking, there is *"only"* one thing we have left to do and that is to make our people so "enlightened" that they understand all the advantages of everybody participating in the work of the co-operatives, and organise this participation. *"Only"* that. There are now no other devices needed to advance to socialism. But to achieve this "only", there must be a veritable revolution–the entire people must go through a period of cultural development. Therefore, our rule must be: as little philosophising and as few acrobatics as possible. In this respect NEP is an advance, because it is adjustable to the level of the most ordinary peasant and does not demand anything higher of him. But it will take a whole historical epoch to get the entire population into the work of the co-operatives through NEP. At best we can achieve this in one or two decades. Nevertheless, it will be a distinct historical epoch, and without this historical epoch, without universal literacy, without a proper degree of efficiency, without training the population sufficiently to acquire the habit of book-reading, and without the material basis for this, without a certain sufficiency to safeguard against, say, bad harvests, famine, etc.–without this we shall not achieve our object. The thing now is to learn to combine the wide revolutionary range of action, the revolutionary enthusiasm which we have displayed, and displayed abundantly, and crowned with complete success–to learn to combine this with (I am almost inclined to say) the ability to be an efficient and capable trader, which is quite enough to be a good co-operator. By ability to be a trader I mean the ability to be a cultured trader. Let those Russians, or peasants, who imagine that since they trade they are good traders, get

that well into their heads. This does not follow at all. They do trade, but that is far from being cultured traders. They now trade in an Asiatic manner, but to be a good trader one must trade in the European manner. They are a whole epoch behind in that.

In conclusion: a number of economic, financial and banking privileges must be granted to the co-operatives—this is the way our socialist state must promote the new principle on which the population must be organised. But this is only the general outline of the task; it does not define and depict in detail the entire content of the practical task, i.e., we must find what form of "bonus" to give for joining the co-operatives (and the terms on which we should give it), the form of bonus by which we shall assist the co-operatives sufficiently, the form of bonus that will produce the civilised co-operator. And given social ownership of the means of production, given the class victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, the system of civilised co-operators is the system of socialism.

January 4, 1923

II

Whenever I wrote about the New Economic Policy I always quoted the article on state capitalism which I wrote in 1918. This has more than once aroused doubts in the minds of certain young comrades. But their doubts were mainly on abstract political points.

It seemed to them that the term "state capitalism" could not be applied to a system under which the means of production were owned by the working class, a working class that held political power. They did not notice, however, that I used the term "state capitalism", *firstly*, to connect historically our present position with the position adopted in my controversy with the so-called Left Communists; also, I argued at the time that state capitalism would be superior to our existing economy. It was important for me to show the continuity between ordinary state capitalism and the unusual, even very unusual, state

capitalism to which I referred in introducing the reader to the New Economic Policy. *Secondly,* the practical purpose was always important to me. And the practical purpose of our New Economic Policy was to lease out concessions. In the prevailing circumstances, concessions in our country would unquestionably have been a pure type of state capitalism. That is how I argued about state capitalism.

But there is another aspect of the matter for which we may need state capitalism, or at least a comparison with it. It is the question of co-operatives.

In the capitalist state, co-operatives are no doubt collective capitalist institutions. Nor is there any doubt that under our present economic conditions, when we combine private capitalist enterprises–but in no other way than on nationalised land and in no other way than under the control of the working-class state–with enterprises of a consistently socialist type (the means of production, the land on which the enterprises are situated, and the enterprises as a whole belonging to the state), the question arises about a third type of enterprise, the co-operatives, which were not formerly regarded as an independent type differing fundamentally from the others. Under private capitalism, co-operative enterprises differ from capitalist enterprises as collective enterprises differ from private enterprises. Under state capitalism, co-operative enterprises differ from state capitalist enterprises, firstly, because they are private enterprises, and, secondly, because they are collective enterprises. Under our present system, co-operative enterprises differ from private capitalist enterprises because they are collective enterprises, but do not differ from socialist enterprises if the land on which they are situated and the means of production belong to the state, i.e., the working class.

This circumstance is not considered sufficiently when co-operatives are discussed. It is forgotten that owing to the special features of our political system, our co-operatives acquire an altogether exceptional significance. If we exclude concessions, which, incidentally, have not

developed on any considerable scale, co-operation under our conditions nearly always coincides fully with socialism.

Let me explain what I mean. Why were the plans of the old co-operators, from Robert Owen onwards, fantastic? Because they dreamed of peacefully remodelling contemporary society into socialism without taking account of such fundamental questions as the class struggle, the capture of political power by the working class, the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class. That is why we are right in regarding as entirely fantastic this "co-operative" socialism, and as romantic, and even banal, the dream of transforming class enemies into class collaborators and class war into class peace (so-called class truce) by merely organising the population in co-operative societies.

Undoubtedly we were right from the point of view of the fundamental task of the present day, for socialism cannot be established without a class struggle for political power in the state.

But see how things have changed now that political power is in the hands of the working class, now that the political power of the exploiters is overthrown and all the means of production (except those which the workers' state voluntarily abandons on specified terms and for a certain time to the exploiters in the form of concessions) are owned by the working class.

Now we are entitled to say that for us the mere growth of co-operation, (with the "slight" exception mentioned above) is identical with the growth of socialism, and at the same time we have to admit that there has been a radical modification in our whole outlook on socialism. The radical modification is this; formerly we placed, and had to place, the main emphasis on the political struggle, on revolution, on winning political power, etc. Now the emphasis is changing and shifting to peaceful, organisational, "cultural" work. I should say that emphasis is shifting to educational work, were it not for our international relations, were it not for the fact that we have to

fight for our position on a world scale. If we leave that aside, however, and confine ourselves to internal economic relations, the emphasis in our work is certainly shifting to education.

Two main tasks confront us, which constitute the epoch—to reorganise our machinery of state, which is utterly useless, and which we took over in its entirety from the preceding epoch; during the past five years of struggle we did not, and could not, drastically reorganise it. Our second task is educational work among the peasants. And the economic object of this educational work among the peasants is to organise the latter in co-operative societies. If the whole of the peasantry had been organised in co-operatives, we would by now have been standing with both feet on the soil of socialism. But the organisation of the entire peasantry in co-operative societies presupposes a standard of culture among the peasants (precisely among the peasants as the overwhelming mass) that cannot, in fact, be achieved without a cultural revolution.

Our opponents told us repeatedly that we were rash in undertaking to implant socialism in an insufficiently cultured country. But they were misled by our having started from the opposite end to that prescribed by theory (the theory of pedants of all kinds), because in our country the political and social revolution preceded the cultural revolution, that very cultural revolution which nevertheless now confronts us.

This cultural revolution would now suffice to make our country a completely socialist country; but it presents immense difficulties of a purely cultural (for we are illiterate) and material character (for to be cultured we must achieve a certain development of the material means of production, must have a certain material base).

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Signed: *N. Lenin*

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NOTES

[1] *The State Duma*–a representative body set up by the tsarist government as a result of the revolutionary events of 1905. Formally a legislative body, it had no real power. The elections to it were neither direct, equal nor universal. The franchise of the working people and of the non-Russian nationalities inhabiting Russia was greatly restricted and a considerable section of the workers and peasants had no franchise at all. p. 7

[2] *Cadets*–members of the Constitutional-Democratic Party, the main political organisation of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie in Russia. Founded in October 1905. p. 7

[3] *Trudoviks*–a group of petty-bourgeois democrats in the State Dumas. The Trudovik group was formed in April 1906 by peasant deputies and members of the Socialist-Revolutionary and Popular-Socialist parties. p. 7

[4] *The Fourth (Unity) Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.* was held in Stockholm on April 10-25 (April 23-May 8), 1906. p. 7

[5] *Socialist-Revolutionaries*–members of the petty-bourgeois Socialist-Revolutionary Party in Russia, founded at the close of 1901 and the beginning of 1902 through the merging of various Narodnik groups and circles.

Narodism was the ideology of petty-bourgeois peasant democracy in Russia. The distinctive features of the Narodniks were their desire to prove that the small peasant economy differed radically from the capitalist economy, their denial of the economic and class differentiation of the peasantry, and advocacy of utopian socialism, based on the transformation of agrarian relations. p. 7

[6] The bill also provided for common use of land, which was distributed according to consumption and labour quotas. p. 8

[7] *Civil mediators*—an administrative office introduced when the Peasant Reform of 1861, which abolished serfdom in Russia, was implemented. They were appointed by the tsarist government from among the local nobility and were empowered to examine and settle disputes between landowners and peasants arising out of the implementation of the Reform "Regulations". Civil mediators were represented exclusively by the nobility, and aided the tsarist government in implementing the predatory "Peasant Reform" in favour of the landowners. p. 12

[8] *In 1861 (February 19)*, serfdom was abolished in Russia. But though peasants acquired "personal freedom", they had to redeem the land tilled by them at a price considerably exceeding the market price. Besides, the best parts of the peasants' plots, including meadows, forests, pastures and watering places were taken away from them and given to the landowners. p. 12

[9] The reference is to the Stolypin agrarian reform (1906-11), which got its name from Stolypin, the then Minister of the Interior and Chairman of the Council of Ministers. It was designed to raise the economic and political status of the well-to-do farmers and thereby split the peasantry and distract it from revolutionary struggle against the landowners. The central point of the reform was that any peasant could withdraw from the commune and become a full owner of his land; in that case, the peasant could demand that all his land be brought into one farmstead, an *otrub* or a *khutor*. The reform was a failure, because it accelerated the impoverishment of the bulk of the peasantry and caused an aggravation of the agrarian crisis. p. 16

[10] *Nevskaya Zvezda (The Neva Star)*—a Bolshevik legal newspaper published in St. Petersburg in 1912. p. 16

[11] *Labour rent*—a peasant's work with his own implements on a big landowner's land as a form of repayment (of loan, for land, damage done by his cattle to the landowner's crop, and the like). p. 17

[12] *Winter hiring*—the hiring of peasants for summer work, practised by the landlords and kulaks during the winter, when the peasants were badly in need of cash and compelled to accept shackling terms. p. 17

[13] *Composite labour-service*—a form of labour-service and renting of landowner land by peasants on onerous terms in post-Reform

Russia. Under this system the peasants committed themselves–for money, a loan for the winter, or for the land rented to them–to till with their own implements and horses one dessiatine (approximately 1.1 hectares) of the landowner's spring crop, one dessiatine of his winter crop, and sometimes also one dessiatine of meadowland. p. 17

[14] *On February 19, 1861,* Tsar Alexander II signed the Manifesto abolishing serfdom in Russia. p. 20

[15] *Le Peuple*–a daily newspaper, central organ of the Belgian Labour Party, published in Brussels from 1885. At present, organ of the Belgian Socialist Party. p. 22

[16] *Purishkevich, V. M.* (1870-1920)–a big Russian landowner, one of the founders of the Black-Hundred Union of the Russian People, and the founder of the counter-revolutionary monarchist Chamber of the Archangel Michael. He was a deputy to the Second, Third and Fourth Dumas. p. 29

[17] These words are taken from Marx's letter to Ludwig Kugelmann, dated April 12, 1871, in which Marx gave an appraisal of the Paris Commune. p. 30

[18] Quotation from Engels's Preface to the first German edition of *The Poverty of Philosophy* by Karl Marx. p. 32

[19] *Crown lands*–land turned over out of the total of state lands to the members of the tsarist household as their private property, together with the peasants who worked on it, by an ukase of Paul I in 1797. The revenue from the exploitation of crown-land peasants was used for the upkeep of the imperial family. These sums were not included in the state budget and were not subject to control by the state. p. 34

[20] *Izvestia Vserossiiskogo Soveta Krestyanskikh Deputatov*–a daily published in Petrograd from May 9 (22) to December 1917. The paper was the mouthpiece of the Right wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. p. 37

[21] *Struveism*–a liberal bourgeois distortion of Marxism, named after P. B. Struve, the principal exponent of legal Marxism in Russia. Legal Marxism emerged as a socio-political trend in the 1890s among Russian liberal bourgeois intellectuals. Lenin pointed out that Struveism adopted from Marxism everything acceptable to the liberal bourgeoisie and discarded its most important features –its revolutionary content, the theory of the inevitable collapse of capitalism, proletarian revolution and the dictatorship of the

proletariat. Struve lauded the capitalist system and proposed "learning from capitalism". By exposing the liberal bourgeois ideology of the legal Marxists, Lenin exposed international revisionism in general. p. 41

[22] *Tsereteli, I. G.* (1882-1959)–a Menshevik leader. After the bourgeois-democratic revolution of February 1917–member of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets (first convocation). In May 1917 became Minister in the bourgeois Provisional Government.

Skobelev, M. I. (1885-1939)–a Menshevik until 1922; between May and August 1917, Minister of Labour in the Provisional Government.

Chernov, V. M. (1876-1952)–a leader and theoretician of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Between May and August 1917, Minister of Agriculture in the Provisional Government; sanctioned cruel repressions against peasants seizing landed estates. After the October Revolution took part in anti-Soviet activity.

Avksentyev, N. D. (1878-1943)–a leader of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, Minister of the Interior in the second coalition government headed by Kerensky, then Chairman of the counter-revolutionary Provisional Council of the Republic. After the October Revolution became one of the initiators of counter-revolutionary revolts. p. 41

[23] Reference is to the land reforms which the British Government introduced in Ireland with the object of diverting the popular masses from the revolutionary struggle. The Land Law of 1881 provided for the participation of legal authorities in determining the "fair" amount of rent. The tenant was allowed to give his plot to another person. This law safeguarded the interests of the landowners, who got the right to sell their land to the state on very favourable terms, and who profited from the introduction of rent fixed for a period of 15 years at a time when the prices of agricultural produce were going down. p. 51

[24] *Dan (Gurvich), F. I.* (1871-1947)–a Menshevik leader. After the bourgeois-democratic revolution of February 1917, member of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet and of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (first convocation). Supported the bourgeois Provisional Government. After the October Socialist Revolution fought against the Soviet government and in 1922 was exiled abroad as an enemy of the Soviet state. p. 52

[25] *Factory lands*–allotted by the tsarist government to factory owners to be given to the workers of these factories as the sole redemption for their work. p. 54

[26] Lenin wrote this article in the form of a reply to numerous peasant delegations that applied to the Council of People's Commissars. A typewritten copy of the "Reply", addressed to a particular gubernia, from which a delegation arrived, was signed by Lenin and handed to the peasant delegates. The "Reply" was also published in newspapers and as a leaflet under the title "Instructions to the Peasants". It was an important document which helped to abolish landed estates in a revolutionary manner. p. 58

[27] *Poor Peasants' Committees* were instituted by a decree of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee on June 11, 1918. Their task was to keep account of food supplies possessed by the peasant farms, expose surpluses of food hidden by the kulaks, and help the Soviet food organisations in the work of confiscating these surpluses. The Committees were also responsible for providing the poor peasants with food confiscated from the kulaks, for distributing agricultural implements and industrial goods, etc.

The Communist Party directed the organisation of the Poor Peasants' Committees and by the autumn of 1918 there were over eighty thousand of them functioning in rural localities. They virtually became organs of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the countryside, playing an important part in suppressing counter-revolutionary outbreaks organised by the kulaks and in undermining their economic power. They also did good work in completely abolishing the landed estates and in keeping the famine-stricken urban workers and units of the Red Army supplied with food.

Poor Peasants' Committees fulfilled the tasks assigned to them towards the end of 1918. By that time the position of the Soviets in the countryside had grown considerably stronger thanks to the work done by the Committees and by numerous Party cells organised in the villages. The Extraordinary Sixth All-Russia Congress of Soviets held in November 1918 took this fact into consideration and decided to merge the Poor Peasants' Committees with volost and village Soviets in order to "complete Soviet construction by creating a uniform organisation of Soviets throughout the territory of the Soviet Republic". p. 60

[28] The counter-revolutionary revolt of the Czechoslovak Army Corps was organised by the Entente imperialists with the active participation of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. The Corps had been formed in Russia prior to the victory of the October Socialist Revolution out of Czech and Slovak prisoners of war. After the victory of the October Revolution the Entente powers undertook to finance the Czechoslovak Corps, planning to use it against the Soviet Republic.

The revolt broke out at the end of May 1918. Operating in close contact with the whiteguards and the kulaks, the insurgent Corps occupied a large part of the Urals, the Volga area and Siberia, everywhere restoring the rule of the bourgeoisie. But the majority of the Czech and Slovak prisoners sympathised with the Soviet government and refused to be taken in by the anti-Soviet propaganda of their reactionary superiors. Realising that they were being tricked, many of the rank and file refused to fight against Soviet Russia and fled from the Corps. Nearly 12,000 Czechs and Slovaks fought in the ranks of the Red Army. The revolt of the Czechoslovak Corps was crushed at the close of 1919 when Kolchak's whiteguard armies were routed.

p. 62

[29] Paper money issued in 1917 by the Kerensky bourgeois Provisional Government. p. 63

[30] *The committee concerned with work in the countryside* was set up on March 18, 1919, at the first session of the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.). The agrarian committee met three times (on March 20, 21 and 22) to hear the reports on the land policy and on work in the countryside, and elect a commission to examine the theses. The Congress endorsed the resolution on the attitude to the middle peasant drafted by Lenin and the theses "On Political Propaganda and Cultural and Educational Work in the Countryside" written by A. V. Lunacharsky and edited by Lenin. p. 80

[31] On March 21, 1919, a Soviet Republic was proclaimed in Hungary. Its government included representatives of the Communist and Social-Democratic parties, which merged to form the Socialist Party of Hungary. The Entente imperialists organised military intervention and the economic blockade of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The offensive of the interventionist troops was accompanied by the revival of counter-revolutionary forces inside Hungary. The treachery of the Right-wing Social-Democrats and the fact that Soviet Russia, besieged by numerous enemies, was unable to render help to Hungary were also factors that weakened the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which fell on August 1, 1919. p. 83

[32] *Kolchak, A. V.* (1873-1920)–Admiral of the tsarist Navy, one of the leaders of Russian counter-revolution in 1918-19. Following the October Socialist Revolution, proclaimed himself the supreme ruler of Russia and stood at the head of the military dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and landowners in the Urals, Siberia and the Far East. In this undertaking he was supported by the U.S., British and French imperialists. The blows inflicted by the Red Army and the mounting guerilla warfare brought about the utter

defeat of the Kolchak armies. Kolchak was captured and sentenced to death by the Irkutsk Revolutionary Committee. He was executed on February 7, 1920. p. 84

[33] Cf. Frederick Engels, *The Peasant Question in France and Germany.* p. 88

[34] J. Marchlewski's article "The Agrarian Question and the World Revolution" was published in the *Communist International* No. 12, July 20, 1920. Lenin read this article before it was published in the magazine. p. 114

[35] *The New Economic Policy (NEP)*–the economic policy of the Soviet state during the country's transition from capitalism to socialism. The main purpose of this policy was to strengthen the alliance of the working class and peasantry. Called new because it succeeded the policy of so-called War Communism pursued by the Soviet state during the Civil War and the foreign intervention (1918-20) in order to mobilise all forces against the enemy; it amounted to a state grain monopoly, with all private trade in grain and other foodstuffs being banned. The state obtained foodstuffs from peasants through the *food requisitioning* system, under which peasants were obliged to turn over all food surpluses to the state at fixed prices.

Under the New Economic Policy, the food requisitioning system was replaced by a *tax in kind* (1921), which was almost half of what peasants had had to turn over under the food requisitioning system. After paying the tax, the peasant could freely sell his food surpluses. This acted as an incentive. The New Economic Policy helped rehabilitate war-ruined agriculture, expand commodity circulation between town and country, consolidate the worker-peasant alliance, and thereby restore industry. p. 129

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В. И. Ленин

ВОПРОС О ЗЕМЛЕ И БОРЬБА ЗА СВОБОДУ

На английском языке